

Global Labour Shortcomings

The contention could be raised that local labour unions tend to concern themselves with parochial and national issues, more so than with global developments. It is likely that the basis for this contention stands to be questioned. While that may be so, the reasoning may be embedded in the fact there is a tendency for local labour unions to be silent on matters which capture international media attention. If this observation is not well founded, it can only be brushed aside where there is evidence to support a contrary point of view.

Within the Caribbean region, the knowledge and details on issues being faced by individual trade unions in the various territories are not often well known. It is quite possible that trade unions which are embattled in a crisis, may be guilty of not acquainting their fellow trade union organizations within their region of the world, aware of the issue. Where this happens, there can be no disappointment and frustration if there is no forthcoming expression of support and solidarity.

This raises questions regarding the level of communication that exists within the trade union groupings around the world, that are affiliated to international trade unions organizations. Communication is important to the building of trade union unity and solidarity. The sharing of information and experiences goes a long way in helping to build confidence, strengthening the individual and collection action of trade unions.

Some will argue that the visibility of international trade union organizations and that of local labour unions in the various regions of the world, may not be receiving the level of attention that they deserve from the international media. It would appear that the media has a greater interest in political issues that command world attention, more so than those which are about the sufferings, hardships, trampling of workers' rights, human rights and civil rights. Some may even share the opinion that the world's political leaders tend to have the ears of the media. It may be perceived that these political leaders indirectly address matters of interest to labour. It should not be difficult to realize that global political issues are more about the exercise of world political power, authority and control, and not about treating

to collective bargaining, organizing workers, protecting and promoting the interest of workers.

It is about time that trade union leaders at the international, regional and local levels, be more visible and aggressive in their pronouncement on issues such as the displacement of workers and people as refugees, the migration of workers, the imprisonment and exile of trade union leaders, the continued acts of force labour in some parts of the world, and the heinous crime of human trafficking. Added to these would be the issues of equal pay for equal work and the embracing of persons with disabilities within employment. Why should women continue to be marginalized and discriminated against when it comes to being paid equally like their male counterparts? Why should persons with disabilities still have to fight to be treated as equals?

What is most disturbing is the fact that many governments across the globe have ratified the eight core ILO Conventions. It is contradictory and amazing that their actions in the treatment of labour are far from what is expected. Trade unions can only blame themselves for this predicament. They have allowed the political element to embrace them under the guise that there are labour parties, which have the interest of working-class people at heart. Even if they are well intended, the evidence points to the fact that their actions often appear not to be consistent. This in turn can raise doubts about the trust and confidence which workers have in politicians, political parties, governments and even labour unions.