

## To Serve and Protect

The motto of 'To serve and protect,' is known to be associated with the work of the Police across the globe. Based on international, regional and local media coverage and that of social media postings, the actuality of this is sometimes placed under the microscope. Trade unions can without a doubt identify with this motto, for they too are called upon to serve, protect and promote the interest of workers.

It has been established that protection is part of service. In providing service, trade unions are in the vanguard of advocacy, promoting the interest and welfare of workers, representing and defending the causes and rights of workers.

Policemen as Law Enforcement Officers as paid professionals, take an oath which reads, "I do solemnly swear that my fundamental duty is to serve the community; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the constitutional rights of all ..."

This oath can also be applied too and embraced by trade union leaders. This is notwithstanding the fact that for the most part, they are volunteers. What is of the utmost importance would be the precepts, principles, best practices and ethics which are expected to be observed in the delivery of service. Being guided by the oath which is taken by Police Officers, this bring us to undertake a fuller examination of what is required them. They are expected to serve regardless of the risk of potential harm to themselves. They have sworn to uphold the law and made a commitment to respond to the call of duty. It can be added, that they are required to be courteous, honest and adhere to standards of conduct.

The trade union movement could consider that it has fallen short of some expectations. Repeated complaints about the quality of service delivery and representation offered brings this to light. This means that there are questions and red flags being raised over the failing of the trade unions' leadership to keep the promise made to truthfully carry out its pledged actions and duties. It is at this point that the image of the trade unions becomes questionable. If the image of the trade union begins to wane, then it is quite possible that the credibility of the organizations can be impacted.

Trade unions have an awesome responsibility to set and maintain a positive image. This must be the counter to a negative image which will inevitably decrease the interest and satisfaction of members. Like any group of professionals and or professional body, support and respect will only be galvanized, if actions are reflective of what the trade union stands for, promotes and practices.

It makes good sense to move towards creating and maintaining a good image, inasmuch that this is fundamental to the building of trust and unity amongst the membership. If the trade unions is to be a force to be reckoned with and is to be respected by the other social partners, then there must be a conscious effort made to get things right. The last thing which trade unions want, is to have a discontented and disgruntled membership.

It has to be borne in mind that the trade union will not be attractive if it cannot portray a positive image of itself. The right image will depend largely on how effective the trade union is in its communication, and how it is judged on its integrity, accountability and professionalism.

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