

## **Maintaining Discipline and Order**

Maintaining discipline and order has been the bedrock on which orderly societies have been built. The exercise of control has traditionally been grounded in the enforcement and observance of laws, rules and regulations. It is expected that within a civil society the behaviour of the people would be fashioned by its value system and institutionalized measures. It would also be expected that the socialization process which commences in the home environment and is reinforced in our schools and other institutions within the society, would shape the behaviour of people, with a view to bringing about conformity.

As our people traverse life's journey from childhood to adulthood, it is expected that standards and discipline are entrenched in their psyche, so as to ensure that order is maintained in the various roles they and functions they execute. Where the standards have been well enforced, this leads to the cementing of discipline and order, and this becomes part of the existing culture. As a consequence, it is expected that the workplace would benefit from this regime. It however does not necessarily follow that this would be the case, for society itself can compromise on its value system, and this can create the world of problems for maintaining the regime of discipline and order.

Workplaces require discipline and order to prevail within their environment, as this contributes immensely to organizational stability, the maintenance of good employer–employee relations, the existence of a climate of co-operation and team work, and most importantly, a sustained level of productivity. It is therefore imperative that in the workplace, significant emphasis is placed on eliminating any form of behaviour or actions that will lead to the breakdown of order.

This signifies the importance attached to employers having in place workplace policies which address the expectations of their employees. However, in developing any policy that is intended to address codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures, employers are cautioned against any extreme actions which serve to infringe the constitutional, civil and human rights of their employees. In some instances there is room for uniformity in the ways that matters are addressed, so as to ensure that the maintenance of discipline and order are neither taken lightly nor for granted.

With crime and violence now a headache in most societies, it has become something that cannot be ignored, neither can it be passed off as an issue that rest primarily with law enforcement. As far as the workplace is concerned, it would be callous for employers and labour unions not to work together in a conscious effort to prevent and eliminate any threats that can compromise the stability and credibility of the workplace, and further, endanger the life of employees, customers and clients.

It is accepted that in some jurisdictions there is a no tolerance policy as it relates to the use of illicit drugs, alcohol use, fighting, acts of violence in the workplace, and smoking in public places. These are some of the more common acts that would be of concern to employers, employees and members of the public. In the absence of stringent rules, policies and procedures, it stands to reason that inappropriate behaviour is likely to infiltrate the workplace. As the threats continue to loom, it is becoming more obvious of the need to be proactive in order to protect our societies in general and workers especially from themselves. The move to introduce a Sexual Harassment Act as in the case of Barbados can only be for the purpose of negating any intended improper act(s) of one worker against another, employer upon employee or visa-versa.

In the past, there was seemingly a tendency to associate discipline and order in our workplaces with acts related to thief, department, workplace tardiness and other minor offences. With the growing hostility and changing attitudes of workers, this situation warrants a serious rethink of how best to address the shift that has come to the fore. Inasmuch that the world has a tolerance for human rights and workers' rights, this brings our societies to reason as to where the line needs to be drawn. For instance, it is for those societies that have removed the level of discipline and control which teachers had in the class room, and place the focus on the promotion of children rights as a priority, to quiz themselves as to whether these positions as taken, have contributed to the rising tide of indiscipline and disorder which pervade our societies and threaten to compromise the workplace.