

BARBADOS TODAY

Column: In My Interest

Article: Restoring Lost Confidence

For Publication: 29 August 2014

In the recent times the labour movement in Barbados has come under immense pressure from some quarters of the public. This bashing which has become apparent stems from the perception in some quarters that the local trade unions in particular have lost their vibrancy and militancy. Whether merited or not, questions have been raised over the issue of leadership, and more so the proactive nature of the unions to act. This all boils down to questioning the role and function of the trade unions in adequately representing the interest and welfare of their members.

It is to be accepted that criticisms is a necessary evil. It has its place as it forces the leadership of the movement to guard against falling into the realms of complacency. It should be a cause for concern where the movement finds itself being constantly bombarded by negative criticisms. Against the backdrop of this, it is for the leaders within movement and the members of their Executive Boards or Councils to seize the opportunity to do some serious introspection. Based on the bombardment of criticisms and accusations that are being levied, it would be wise for individual trade union organizations to undertake a review the policies , actions and approaches they currently follow.

Maintaining the membership base of individual trade union organization must be seen as paramount if the movement is to have any influence as well as maintain its relevance. There will always be strength in numbers. Furthermore, solidarity and unification makes for a stronger labour movement. There is the need for a mature leadership to recognize that

discord, fractures / divisions, arrogance and individualism will certainly undermine the building of a strong and vibrant labour movement. If it is to be accepted by the leadership that the survival of the movement comes first, then it should be recognized that there is no place within the scheme of things for promoting individualism, inflated egos, and for giving life to the sentiments expressed by George Orwell in the book Animal Farm, that " All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others"

Modern day trade union leaders should realized that in an age that promotes collectivism, the embracing and empowering of persons in the life of an organization, that such narrow minded thinking and the display of unhealthy attitudes are being resented. It therefore must be emphasized that emerging leaders of the movement who decide not to follow this path, but believe in promoting the individual over the collective, will more than likely find that they are threading down a pathway which is a recipe for disaster.

Trade unionists irrespective of where they are, should be ever mindful that the eyes of the world are upon them. They can ill afford to give the communities which they serve reasons to condemn them. There is no need for grandstanding, violating the very principles that the movement subscribes too and promotes, such as engaging in discriminatory practices' and /or the making of public statement which border on being derogatory, offensive and poor taste, which are supposedly to be passed off under the guise of muscular language. Not only should leaders remain true to the principles and practices that they promote and preach, but also refrain from behaving like the proverbial 'Little Hitler.'

These apart, the restoration of confidence in the movement, resides in the reassurance that the movement is not resting on its laurels, but remains committed to being proactive, and to being a stout defender of workers' rights.

DENNIS DE PEIZA

Labour Management Consultant

Regional Management Services Inc.

Visit our Website:www.regionalmanagementservices.com

Send your comments to: rmsinc@caribsurf.com