

The Politics of Inclusion

The concept of the politics of inclusion is meant to be a practice which involves others in the governance and decision-making process. In promoting the concept at the national level, this means that there is a commitment to the participation of the social partners in the governance and discussion making process of the country. It goes without saying that there is an embrace of the engagement of social dialogue. However, with the practice of inclusion comes an understanding of mutual respect, openness, and the sharing of information.

The idea of promoting the politics of inclusion is not designed to be implemented as a matter of convenience, as to do so would be to make a mockery of the intention of the process. The partners in the arrangement are expected to be treated fairly and without any bias, prejudice and /or favouritism. If the process of inclusion is to work as intended, then there is no room for those behaviours which are counter productivity to the achieving the goal of good governance. It is unfair and unreasonable to sideline a partner in such a governance arrangement, for this certainly will not advance the work of the social partnership. It is more than likely to create a divide and hinder progress in advancing matters of the state.

One of the hallmarks of political inclusion is the acceptance of the practice of democracy. If this is not entertained, it is highly likely that the governance arrangement will be under threat. The purpose of political inclusion would be to promote awareness and organize collective action. It cannot be disputed and is to be expected that the representation of interest of the individual parties lie at the core. The ability to find common ground is most important to the success of the partnership, and this more than anything else matters the most. The exertion of political power, authority and dominance of any one party in the working of the group cannot and will not prove to be in the best interest of the governance arrangement.

It is desirable when inclusion, political and social inclusion becomes the order of the day. This gives hope that there is a consciousness that the views of others matters. The difficulty occurs when there is the alienation of any of the partners or there is a preference given to one. It can be disheartening when the lines of the politics of inclusion are blurred. This can only happen when and where there is a fundamental breach in observing the guiding principles which govern the existence and workings of the partnership. This is tantamount to what the trade unions call bad faith bargaining, something which many employers stand to be accused of. In essence they give their word, but fail to keep it.

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Good practice dictates that fairness is applied in what is done. Put another way, it can be said, 'justice must be seen to be done.' It is behaviour like this that should motivate the leaders of organizations to press home their demand, for to give up, is to adopt a defeatist attitude.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion has been a feature of the Caribbean labour movement. Governments are known to practice the art, through the creation of alliances with individual trade unions. They capture the hearts and souls of individuals who proudly accept a political appointment that is offered by a government, while at the same time serving in the leadership of a trade union organization. The closing of the door to the entry of an individual trade union to the membership of a national centre, or the denial of access of a national centre into the membership to a regional or international trade union body, tells the sorry tale of exclusion.

While this all seems like a nightmare, the startling reality is that it is true. The nightmare turns into a horror story when national centres are overlooked by governments, and are left basically out in the cold. Trade unions continue to face the struggle of being recognized and treated fairly. Since the principle of fairness underlines the work of the labour movement, then it stands to reason that the struggle has to continue until victory is secured. It is for believers to continue to live in faith, for according to the holy scripture, Mark 12:10, "The **stone the builders rejected** has become the cornerstone. "