

## **Revisiting the Expectations of Trade Unions**

As it stands, it would seem that within the context of a changing global environment, there are some pressures being exerted on trade unions to meet and satisfy the expectations of today's workforce. Some have advanced the view that trade unions have become steeped in traditions; primary of which is that of concerning themselves with representation and collective bargaining issues.

In response to the times, the case can be made that trade unions should concern themselves with democratic stability, political stability, economic and financial stability, environmental stability and organizational stability, inclusiveness and equality, transparency and accountability. The importance of none of these can be down played as each one is significant in the mix when it comes to policy development and operations coherence.

With the acceptance of the labour as an integral partner in the national governance process, it requires that labour plays a more decisive role in the monitoring, evaluation and assessment of national policies, if it is to play the expected role in protecting and safeguarding the interest of working class people. Labour leaders must be mindful that while they enter into a common space with government and capital, that the interest and agenda of these two parties are fundamentally different from labour itself. Labour should remain conscious of the fact that both capital and government share a common identity as employers.

This basically speaks to the labour exercising greater vigilance in at the political end. Basically it imposes upon itself the responsibility of a monitoring and evaluation role. This requires it to ensure at the execution end, that there is compliance with agreements and understandings reached by the social partners. Beyond that labour is required to pay more attention to protecting the worker as a consumer. This is where direct attention is to be paid to market surveillance and to the statutory provisions which are introduced to ensure compliance with determined standards. In this regard attention has to place on products purchased by workers as consumers, and the equipment put into use in the production process, which can expose workers to potential hazards and risks.

The trade union movement believes that inclusiveness and equality means that all workers have the right to equal opportunity of treatment in employment and occupation.

Having made the observations that labour has to up its anti on macro issues that impact on its delivery of service to its members and on its effectiveness as a social partners in the new paradigm, none of this can however remove from labour the need

for it to redouble its efforts to address traditional fundamental issues that will never go away.

One such matter is the rising costs of living. This is critical to the quality of life workers enjoy, as their take home pay has to be able to allow them to meet the basic needs of life. Proposed changes to domestic taxation regimes, rising production costs and even rising labour costs are among the issue that will concern the labour movement. It goes without saying that the labour movement would be failing its members and the wider society, if it did not address areas of social and economic exploitation and deprivation where ever they loom.

The work of the trade unions remains consistent when it comes to the employment relations issues, Take for example the current trend to exploit young workers under a system known as 'Zero Contact Hours.' This is the latest move to deny workers the right to secure of tenure and to many the many benefits associated with full time employment. In terms of the quality of life of young workers, the trade union has a responsibility to fight to safeguard security of tenure for workers so as to avail them of the opportunity to have access to loans so that they can purchase a property.

Now that the world is experiencing a cultural shift in the world of world, that includes both technology which is used in production and forms of communication, trade union have an irreversible role to play in promoting the accepted value systems, standards and best practices.