

## **Integrity and Corruption**

The word integrity is defined as the quality of being honest, having strong moral principles and moral uprightness. It is further described as the adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values, which eliminates any association with corruption in any form. This suggests that there is an expectation that in organizations and enterprises, all those in whom authority is invested will be guided by the accepted norms of the society, defined principles, standards, rules and regulations and the law of the land. Inasmuch that the world is not a utopia or perfect world it is rather unlikely that some persons will not fall way short of meeting what is expected.

Much is therefore expected of persons who assume leadership roles in public life. The same can be said for persons in the corporate world or leaders of community organizations. At the end of the day all persons, regardless to whether or not they assume a leadership role are expected to have scruples. Basically, dishonestly is one thing that shouldn't be practiced. It cuts across all streams of society and one that is not limited to cheating, stealing or committing fraudulent acts, but extends to telling lies, being untruthful, misleading, deceiving, deceptive and even/or being a traitor to the cause.

The integrity of our leaders in particular, will come under the microscope when those whom they lead have doubts about their credibility. This is based on their actions and misgivings, on how they present and portray themselves, the perceptions they lead persons to have of them, and what they communicate to their constituents and the members of various publics. Either irresponsible behavior or actions of any individual can sully the perceptions held and image associated with the organization or enterprise, as all members can easily be painted with one brush. This would hardly be an immediate concern for those who knowingly undertake to walk the path of dishonesty or to act without reason, fair play, respect for rules, law and order, and or care for the pain and agony they inflict on others. Basically, we are talking about those selfish and egocentric leaders who sometimes are more concerned about being a popular spectacle or more over, getting what they can, and at all cost. It is at this point that integrity fails to have meaning. It is simply thrown out the window and overtaken by greed and corruption.

It is absurd to think that leaders would be so disdainful to put their self-interests over and above that of their constituents. It is worse yet, where they abuse their positions by not observing the practices of their organizations, refuse to following procedures, and misusing their authority in more ways than one.

Trade unions leaders should not be oblivious to these developments and ought to guard themselves against them. It is no secret that trade unions leaders in the past have been accused of selling out their members, and it would be folly to think that such an accusation will not be

made in the future. It is true that at some time a mistake will be made but certainly it should never be preconceived or blatant.

There are always lessons to be learnt from the mistakes of others. As a case in point, reference is made to Editorial of Barbados Today, 13 May, 2017, which addressed the study on corruption, as conducted by Jamaican Observer Newspaper. It reported that of the 1262 Jamaican students sharing their views on corruption in their country, 37 percent viewed politicians favourably as compared to 63 percent who felt that they had little integrity. Further, 80 percent believe that teachers, medical doctors, athletes, coaches and managers were not corrupt.

Interesting enough, no mention was made of trade unionists. What conclusion is there left to be drawn? If it is that trade unionists in Jamaica are given a passing grade, then trade unionists across the Caribbean region have something good to emulate.