

Taking Elections Seriously

The calling of general elections is known to captivate the attention of both citizens and residents. In like manner it would be expected that the annual or biennial elections of a labour organization would arouse the interest of its membership. The common feature of both elections is the process of campaigning. It gives some indication of the suitability and readiness of individual candidates for election to office.

In the case of domestic labour organizations, very little media coverage is usually given to these. It may be argued that national general elections and those of labour organizations are not on the same scale, so as to attract media interest. Some may argue that given the divide and rule tactics and political tribalism which characterize the campaigning is not a good thing for the labour movement, as these could seriously undermine the promotion of the notion of unity and solidarity. Be that as it may, there is no guarantee that intimidatory and other forms of undesirable behaviour wouldn't surface.

Based on the philosophy and principles labour organizations tend to espouse and abide by, it would be in their best interest to strive to be exemplary in the conduct of their elections affairs. The exposing of dirty linen in public and the bashing of personalities should always be avoided. A blind eye must be turned on any attempts by the media to create a platform for such. Those who are contesting the polls in a general elections, would do well to heed this advice. All those who seek public office, including office within the labour movement, should be conscious that apart from expecting quality representation, the electorate will first look to elect persons whose character is beyond disrepute, and are deemed as dignified, respectful, creditable and trust worthy.

The entering of a smear campaign and the denigration of an individual tends to appeal to those who are less than objective, willing to accept whatever they are told without question, enjoy basking in negativity, and are not prepared to listen to reasoning. Trade union members have the benefit of attending their annual conferences or general meetings, at which they can pose questions and demand answers. In any election, the integrity and honesty of those vying for office must be not be taken lightly. Any serving official or persons offering themselves for office have a responsibility to be honest, truthful and factual. Those seeking office and who take pride in passing the buck rather than taking responsibility, or resort

to shying away from collective responsibility, should come under the microscope of the membership.

In the national general elections, the elections of labour, civil societies and community and sports organizations, it is not unusual to find that those who emerge winners are individuals with a high popularity rating. This does not always prove to be in the best interest of the organization, as such individuals can be found wanting in their ability to deliver. They can sometimes promise much and deliver little or nothing.

The election of officials to lead and manage the affairs of an organization is entrusted to the democratic process. It therefore should be the responsibility of all those who are eligible to vote to do so. In the case of trade unions, members should ensure that a system is in place which ensures their participation in the election process. It may become necessary for consideration to be given to the decentralization of the balloting process; if and where it does not exist. However, it should be noted that any decentralization of the balloting would require security systems to be put in place.

The willingness of an individual to be a member of the leadership and management team of a labour organization must emerge from an abiding passion to give voluntary service. If it is that the candidate knows of constraints to their commitment to service, then it is best not to contest the election. If those elected are not prepared to be objective and take principle positions, but are more inclined for convenient purposes not to rock the boat, then their call to service becomes questionable.