

Practice what you Preach: 10 May 2024

Research has shown that there are some interesting watch words and slogans with which trade unions associate. These are used to effectively motivate the membership as they identify under the banner of unity and solidarity. These watch words and slogans do carry meanings that are not meant to be taken lightly. Leaders who utter and preach them, ought to be conscious of the need to practice what they preach. It is important that those we lead are not placed in a position to question our integrity, sincerity, honesty and intentions. The ultimate aim should always be that of avoiding being charged with hypocrisy. Leaders should always concern themselves with the legacy and memories they wish to leave behind on demitting office.

Some of the commonly known expressions with which trade unions identify are, united in strength, together for a better future, stand strong, stand united, in unity we find strength, solidarity forever, together we rise and divided we fall, one voice- one cause- one union, where there is no vision the people perish, stronger together, unstoppable as one, united we bargain, divided we beg, strength in unity, power in numbers, no retreat- no surrender.

It is to be understood that these expressions are meant to create a bond of solidarity and unity. It can never be considered as appropriate where words of disunity are echoed by trade union leaders. Such an action is basically to undermine and shoot oneself in the foot, as this goes against the efforts aimed at achieving the cause of unity.

Unity is described as the way to build trust and confidence amongst individuals and groups. When individuals are united, they are more likely to trust each other. This leads to increased cooperation and collaboration. Trade unions are known to promote harmony and brotherhood. It is therefore undignified to discredit, humiliate, make unseemly remarks or make a mockery of a fellow trade union. Any such behaviour is defeatist to the promotion of cooperation, and the destruction of trust and respect. These are principles which trade unions firmly promote and should readily admonish those who act contrary.

In the business of trade unionism, there should be no doubt whatsoever, that trade unions all focused on a common goal. This, as we know, is primarily about the representation of workers. With the understanding that unity is about strength, the nature of the business of trade unionism is to engage in collective action which redounds to the benefit of workers and working -class people. This in itself presents a sound basis for maintaining a united bond, as opposed to that of alienating or lashing out at other trade unions. Where there is such behaviour, it may be conceived that it comes as a result that those who are being attacked are perceived to be a threat in some form or fashion.

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Such vile reaction may also border on the promotion of discrimination. This is something that the labour movement bitterly opposes. Labour champions the cause of equality and equity, and any behaviour on the part of a trade union that varies from what are accepted as guiding principles and standard, opens itself to being condemned.

In the promotion of trade union solidarity, it is important that labour leaders have the understanding that the purpose of solidarity is to build the movement, and to embody the common pursuits of mutual care and concern for justice. In addition, it must be taken on board that solidarity works best where there is respect for each other's differing needs and circumstances. The basic understanding of solidarity is that it is about the unity of people who have the same interests and goals, based on common objectives and standards. The takeaway from this is that there is much to be gained if there is consistency in what is preached and practiced.

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