

People's Power

Within a democracy, there is the usual loose reference to the term, 'the People's Power.' The question that can be asked... What does this term really mean? It is described as the capacity of ordinary people to shape decisions that affect their lives, by acting collectively rather than relying only on representatives or authorities. A comparative definition views "People power" as a political slogan which denotes the populist driving force of any social movement that invokes the authority of grassroots opinion and willpower, usually in opposition to that of conventionally organized corporate or political forces.

These two definitions seemingly suggest that democracy can be thought of as the power of the people, as the exercise of governing is meant to be dependable on the will of the people. The will of the people is captured not in individualism but rather in collectivism. The key to collectivism is to be found when organizing takes place. This is a significant point of interest for trade unions, given that their guiding principles require that they work to protect the collective interest of workers, advance workplace rights and improve living standards.

If trade unions are to achieve their aims, objectives and goals, it is imperative that they preach and practice solidarity. Through this means, they will bring workers together to advocate as a unified voice. This lays the platform for engaging in the collective bargaining exercise. Collective bargaining is the cornerstone of the operations of trade unions. With a strong bond of unity and solidarity which emerges from trade union organizing, there is greater comfort to be had in the representation, agitation and lobbying which is to be done on the behalf of workers, as a collective. Moreover, with the strength in numbers, this becomes a powerful factor in the influencing of the decision-making process by the authorities.

Workers can have a sense of empowerment when it comes to the call for promoting social justice and equality of treatment, having the power to take forms of industrial action to have their demands met, especially when the legitimate process of negotiations have failed. The point is to be underscored

that power does not only flow top- down from government, boards and employers, but it flows bottom -up where workers are organized and are prepared to bring pressure to bear.

In summary, it is to be understood that the will of the people is the bedrock of a democratic society. It is the primary source of political legitimacy. This means that governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed. The empowerment of people underpins people's power, from the standpoint that through collective action, it holds those who govern accountable, drives social and political change and eliminates the threat of dictatorship.

It is important to remember that the power of the people is about ordinary citizens, who, through a unified sense of purpose, shape the future of the nation. It must be acknowledged that trade unions do play an essential and vital role in this process, as they act as the organized voice of the working class, working to align economic, social and political policies in accordance with the will of the people.