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PSU, Teachers Union and Police Welfare Association abandon their members

Introduction

The recent behaviour by the leadership of the Public Service Union, the St.Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers Union, and the Police Welfare Association, has cast a gloomy look on relations between trade unions in the country, and the ULP administration. For some reason, the leaders of three of the unions, namely, the Teachers Union, the Public Service Union, and the Police Welfare Association, decided that their narrow party political interest, was more important than that of their members.

For some reason, known only to the leaders, the unions decided to flout the security rules of the Office of the Prime Minister, deciding instead to put their interests ahead of the interest of their members.

The background for this scenario goes back to the media conference held by Prime Minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves on January 7th 2019, during which he touched on the issues of compensation for public servants and pension reform. He then announced that he was going to meet with the members of the trade union in the country, to hold talks on these issues.

The Office of the Prime Minister then made telephone calls and followed up with letters of invitation to all the trade unions in the State to attend a meeting with Comrade Ralph at his office. Now there is a security rule at the office that visitors must surrender their mobile phones to the security officer on duty. This regulation has been in place for a number of years, and persons visiting the office, have had to surrender their mobile phones. This has never created any issues. From time to time, a visitor may indicate that they are expecting a call on their mobile phones, for this or that reason, and the security may accommodate them. No such request was made by the leaders of the three trade unions, when they arrived at the Office of the Prime Minister, last Friday.

Motives

It is clear that the leaders of the three unions, Wendy Bynoe of the Teachers Union, Elroy Boucher of the Public Service Union, and Brenton Smith of the Police Welfare Association, had no interest in putting forward the interests of their members. The meeting was called to discuss the issues of compensation,

or salaries, along with the matter of pension reform. It is clear now, that the three unions have added nothing to the discussion on these matters.

It is now clear too, that the actions of the leaders were politically motivated. The attendance at the meeting was not in the interest of their members. They had another agenda, and so could not comply with the security measures at the Office of the Prime Minister. Let us call a spade for what it is. Elroy Boucher is a supporter of the opposition New Democratic Party, and that is his constitutional right. Boucher's beef, is his inability to gain promotion within the public service, and for this he blames the Prime Minister, hence his opposition to the ULP administration.

Brenton Smith, a career police officer, has played politics with his job. He was clearly not afraid to show his support for the opposition New Democratic Party. Readers will recall the "storming" comments made by Smith in July 2017, and that the police forces brought five charges against him, including one of mutinous behaviour. Wendy Bynoe, the President of the Teachers Union is a known member and supporter of the opposition NDP, as is her constitutional right. Well-thinking observers will say that Bynoe is keen to see the removal of the ULP from office, and that she may use her union in this regard.

Betrayal

It is clear that the three union leaders betrayed the trust and confidence of their members, all of whom pay union dues, hard-earned money in some cases. These teachers and public servants expect that the union leaders will represent their interests, which in this case is compensation and pension reform. Some union members have been bold enough to state that they intend to withdraw their membership from the unions. While the ULP column does not advocate this, perhaps the membership should look at the quality of the leaders they elect to office.

When union leaders betray the trust of their membership they should not hold office. It's as simple as that. If they want to indulge in their political ambitions, then the union is not the place for them. They should resign their positions and join the political party of their choice, which in this case is the opposition NDP. Then they could beat up on the ULP and Comrade Ralph to their heart's content.

In the face of all the criticism leveled at the three leaders, it is amazing to hear their justification and excuses, which are all based on lies. They claim that they were not aware of the regulation at the Office of the Prime Minister in relation to mobile phones. Well nothing could be further from the truth.

The question that we should ask, is, what was the motive of these union leaders? Why did they insist that they should take their phones into the meeting with the Prime Minister? Why did they disregard the security notice at the Office of the

Prime Minister? Is this the attitude of people who want to be leaders in our society?

Conclusion

What of the other trade unions, the CTAWU, and the NWM? They complied with the security arrangements at the Office of the Prime Minister, and entered the meeting to discuss salaries and wages, and pension reform.

On the vital matter of wage/salary increases, the representatives of the CTAWU, NWM, and the GOSVG agreed as follows:

- (i) A one (1) percent retroactive increase from July 01, 2018 to December 31, 2018;
- (ii) A further increase of one and a half (1½) percent increase for 2019; and
- (iii) A further increase of two (2) percent for 2020.

The leaders of the Teachers Union, the Public Service Union and the Police Welfare Association have failed their membership in a terrible way. Union representation is serious business for serious people.