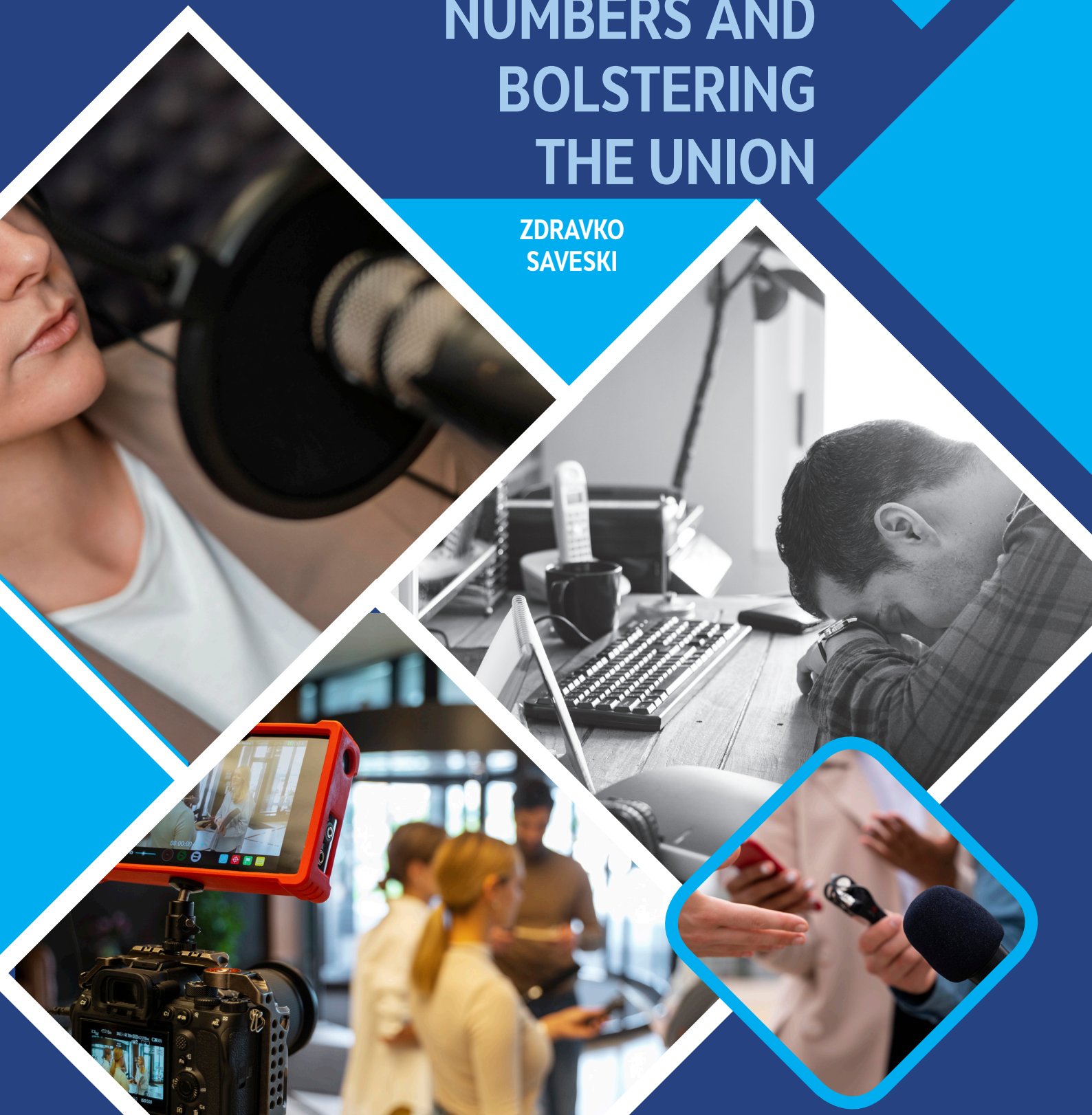


THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY BUILDING IN BOOSTING MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS AND BOLSTERING THE UNION

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Summary

Trade unions are based on the premise that workers, when they stand united and act “as one”, in their interaction with the employer (the owner, the capitalist),¹ have the power to shape the terms of their employment in a way that is not possible for them when acting individually. The larger in terms of membership, and closer-knit the association (union) is, the greater its compound power to bring about the desired change. The meaning of: “United we stand, divided we fall!” is neither void, nor is it a lifeless cliché. Therefore, bringing together a larger number of workers in the union, as well as increasing its internal cohesion are matters directly related to the intensity of every trade union’s own power, including SSNM’s. This analysis takes a look into the issues of recruiting new members and the cohesion among the membership, so that SSNM, but any other union too, by succeeding to take a step forward in this area, can more effectively deliver its program goals.

Introduction

The union’s strength lies in its membership. This is often mentioned in trade union speeches and literature (e.g. Hantke, p. 41.; Kostova-Savic, p. 48; Milanovska-Manevska et al., p. 10). Moreover, since it is frequently used and due to its resemblance to a marketing slogan, a large number of people perceive it as an empty platitude, as a convenient phrase that might sound nice, but is void of meaning. And yet, in reality it is true that the strength of a union genuinely lies in its membership. More specifically, a strong union, a union that not only successfully defends its workers’ rights, but also advances them, must fulfil two indispensable prerequisites:

- to have a large, cohesive and dedicated membership and
- to have a dedicated leadership eager to fight for the workers’ rights.

If any of these two prerequisites is lacking, the union will be powerless and toothless; it will limp on one leg and will not be able to reach too far, that is, at best, it will only be able to achieve half-hearted success.

Therefore, every trade unionist must perceive the standpoint that the strength of the trade union lies in its numbers as a most basic fact, as a starting point of action, as a springboard that turns what was previously deemed impossible into reality. This attitude must under no circumstances be demeaned and reduced down to an empty platitude that comes in handy to flatter the membership. Indeed, it must be embodied and become a reali-

¹ Similarly to the English language which uses the neutral word “employer” this analysis will use the term “employer” [mkd. работодавач], instead of the more typical, but paternalistic term “work-giver” [работодавач], as more appropriate for a trade union analysis.



ty for the union. And once it is embodied, both the leadership and the membership will understand what the impact of the increase in the strength of the union is, and its voice will no longer be a lukewarm plea by the powerless to the powerful, but the voice of a centre of power, which the other party - the opposing centre of power in the class struggle - will not be able to simply ignore.

The union leadership must not take a unresponsive attitude when the situation with the membership is unsatisfactory. If it is unsatisfactory, then this must not be treated as a given, as something that cannot be changed, but engage in further efforts to stir things up at least a little bit and shake up the standstill. With time and work, many things can change to a state that was previously deemed impossible. And, of course, prior to taking action, one should have a clear idea of what kind of change one wants to bring about. A membership that enables and multiplies the strength of the union, as we have already mentioned, should have the following three characteristics:

- be numerous
- be cohesive
- be dedicated.

These three characteristics create the fertile ground that can give birth to union strength. The number of members in the union, the size of its membership, shows the percentage of employees in a sector who are united in the union. Cohesion is in an indicator of the links between the members of the union, how compact its ranks are, how dense the union is. The members' dedication is a reflection of the extent of identification with the unions' goals, the willingness to put one's effort and time to achieve the desired outcome, and not only leave it on paper and forget about it like an empty promise.

It is only combined that these three characteristics create fertile ground. If the membership is lacking in numbers, the prescribed criterion for representativeness of the union will not be met, its financial power will dwindle, and the cohesion and dedication of the membership, as well as the commitment and fervour of the leadership, will not be able to fully compensate for the lack in numbers.

If there is a lack of cohesion, numbers will bring about representativeness, increase the union's bargaining power and its financial power, but the union's ability to take retaliatory actions will take a hit when the opposing party does not bend to the union demands, because organizing those actions in circumstances of lack of cohesion can end up being counterproductive for the union and its members.

Without dedication, the union's membership and cohesion will be underutilized. When taking defensive action, in circumstances when workers' rights are under assault, the union leadership will, to a considerable extent, be able to mobilize the membership. However, certain problems may arise in the process of mobilization, due to the lack of dedication among the membership in situations where the union takes the offensive, when it

strives to advance workers' rights, as this will necessitate the engagement of the membership, and not only of the leadership.

In the context of determining the strength of the union and the factors determining it, it is necessary to take into account the following two elements: the bargain power and the power of protest, as well as their interdependence. The bargaining power represents the ability of the union to achieve the goals it has set through negotiations. The power to protest, on the other hand, determines the ability of the union, through the mobilization of its members and beyond, to undertake industrial action (a strike, a protest, etc.) for defensive or offensive purposes.

The quantity and quality of the membership has substantial effect on both of the aforementioned elements of the union's strength. In terms of bargaining power, if the union is not sufficiently active or successful enough to include a significant number of workers in its ranks it will give the opposing party a strong excuse to go as far as completely reject the union bargaining process as it has not met the prescribed criteria for representativeness. As for the power to protest, without a large, cohesive and dedicated membership, a successful strike can simply not be undertaken. Simply put, a strike cannot be successful if it is being pushed forward by the leadership alone, nor by five or six people, no matter how dedicated they are to the cause. A strike needs numbers and cohesion as prerequisites for its success.

There's one more important point that should be explicitly emphasized when talking about the union's bargaining power and power of protest. To successfully engage in bargaining, one must bargain boldly. And this can only be done by someone who is tough (SGIP, 20 p.; SIER, 17 p.). In other words, the bargaining power of the union is inextricably dependent on its power to protest. A strike, indeed, is a measure of last resort and it is far better if the union demands are achieved by means of bargaining than won over through confrontation. But if the union does not have the capacity to protest or, even worse, if it deprives itself of that capacity due to an ideological commitment to "dialogue", then over the course of the "social dialogue", the opposing party will be able to ignore the union's position very easily, because there is no risk of any consequences coming as a result of their ignoring (Saveski, 2015, p. 107). It is the capacity to respond with a strike to the intransigence of the opposing party that distinguishes the union from, and makes it more powerful than an NGO, which does not have that tool available. Or, to put it in other words, a trade union, which is unable, or for ideological reasons gives up on its tool to respond by organizing a strike, reduces its power to that of an NGO and has a poor bargaining power, because it has no power to protest.

Hereinafter, we will first look at the strategies designed to include new members in the union, then we will look at building cohesion, and finally we will give specific recommendations that could be useful in the upcoming activities and growth of SSNM.

Enhancing the union

Recruiting new members (recruitment, involving, unionizing) is part of the micro level of union activity and can often take place in the background. The process of recruiting new members in the union itself can be either passive or active. It is passive when the unorganized workers are expected to join the union on their own, with the union itself taking no particular outreach efforts in that direction, or having those efforts be reduced to a general announcement on the union's website that workers from a certain sector can become members. An active process of recruiting new members takes place when there is a plan for growth of the union, with agreed-upon activities towards this purpose and with the involvement of the leadership, the union representatives, as well as the active members in the efforts to increase the union membership.

Recruiting new members to the union is certainly not a simple matter even when the issue is approached seriously. It is not only the confidence in the unions that is low, but also the trust in them as well. That is, there is no confidence that the trade unionists possess sufficient determination to act in the best interest of the workers, and, when this is not brought under a question, there is no trust that they have the power to act in the best interest of the workers. For example, a recent survey conducted among journalists and media workers showed that the lack of trust in the power of trade unions is widespread. Namely, every other respondent, fully or to a certain extent, believes that unions are unable to protect workers' rights (Trpevska, 33 p.). In addition to this, nowadays trade unions navigate an unfavourable ideological climate, where the ideology of the existing system of economic relations has taken deep roots among the workers themselves, so deep that they do not recognize it as an ideology but perceive it as a normal and standard state of the human condition. In a situation like this, mistrust of collective action and negative perceptions of the union as an institution, from obsolescence to ineffectiveness, are widespread among the workers themselves. Consequently, the rejection of the fight for values by the unions themselves and their self-perception as organizations that should only offer economic benefits to their members and workers in general, makes the process of uniting the workers in their ranks difficult, which in turn aggravates the process of building cohesion, which is a necessary prerequisite (*conditio sine qua non*) in terms of the unions' power of protest, and consequently their bargaining power.

There is a number of reasons why a significant number of workers are not part of a trade union, that is, they choose to act as non-unionized workers. This may be due to one or more of the following reasons:

- fear of real or perceived sanctions by the employer;
- not having a positive opinion about the union/unions in their sector;
- siding with the employer;
- striving to enjoy benefits without any personal involvement, "no skin in the game" (the so-called free riders/free loaders);

- disbelief in the effectiveness of collective action and belief that they, individually, can bargain for better working conditions;

- because no one approached them to incentivize them to join the union.

When approaching a non-unionized worker, in order to recruit them, it is necessary to determine the reasons why he/she has not become part of the union (yet). And then offer arguments why he/she should join accordingly. In some cases, trying to recruit the non-unionized worker will be relatively easy, and in others, impossible. For example, if the reason he/she is non-unionized is because no one approached them to motivate them to join the union, the task would be relatively easy. By the way, the prevalence of this reason among certain number of workers should not be underestimated at all (SGIP, 10-11 p.; SIER, 9-10 p.). On the other hand, if it is a case of a worker siding with the employer, attempting to reap personal gain at the expense of the collective disadvantage by “colluding” with the employer, then his/her recruitment the union would not only be undesirable, but also counterproductive.

What should a trade union, in this case SSNM, do to unite an additional number of workers in its ranks? The steps, listed from most passive to most active (with each being important in its own right), would be as follows:

- strengthening the confidence and trust in the union through committed and honest work of the leadership and building a positive atmosphere in the union;

- taking advantage of the events organized by the union to invite other workers to join the union;

- promoting the union among future generations of journalists and media workers who are currently students;

- sharing materials and advocacy handouts with calls to join the union on the union’s digital platforms;

- preparing and distributing printed materials (leaflets, brochures, posters, etc.);

- collective meetings and personal discussions with non-unionized workers.

Most of these steps have already been undertaken by SSNM. On this occasion, we will review two of SSNM’s promotional texts used to recruit new members, and then we will pay attention in more detail to the most important tool: collective meetings and personal discussions with non-unionized workers.

The texts we will review are “The Ten Union Commandments” (SSNM, 2014, pp. 12-16 and separate leaflet) and “Why You Should Become a Member” (SSNM, “Why You Should Become a Member”). The first text is on a high motivational note, adequate in length and easy to read. Since the subheading “The Ten Union Commandments” is more striking than the title of the leaflet, “Take a Stand, Don’t Stand Down”, the two could switch plac-



es as headline (title) and subheading of the leaflet. Moreover, this text can be printed as a poster and exhibited at SSNM's premises as a trade union space. The second text, despite the fact that it contains good points, needs to be reformulated, in the sense of adding sub-headings, bolding key words, and possibly addressing the main objections made by non-unionized workers against unionization.

When it comes to collective meetings and talking in person with non-unionized workers, two things need to be kept in mind: first, that this is an organized process and, second, that special attention should be paid to the arguments used in addressing the potential members. The outcome of the attempts to involve new members depends on both parties in the conversation, both the union activist and the non-union worker. An attempt may fail because the disorganized worker is a "hopeless case." But an attempt may also fail because the union activist was not sufficiently prepared and/or committed to the task. It is the union's duty to minimize the occurrence of the second case scenario.

The active process of recruiting union members is planned and managed by the leadership, and it is implemented (during collective meetings) by union representatives and active members (during personal conversations).

Collective meetings are most successful when they come at the request of a group of non-unionized workers, but they can also be organized at the union's premises for potential members who have expressed interest upon a previously published invitation to a meeting by the union.

Organizing the process of union members recruitment through personal conversations requires more extensive engagement. During the planning stage, a union expansion plan should be established that would include the targeted enterprises, a list of activists who could be involved in the recruitment and a plan for their training, in order to familiarize them with the union measures designed in response to the problems faced by workers, as well as the arguments that could be offered to address the objections of the potential members (SGIP, 14-15 p.; SIER, 13 p.).

in order to be up to the task, the union activists (union representatives and active members of the union) who will be involved in in-person conversations with potential members should embody the following characteristics (SGIP, 4 p.; SIER, 3 p.):

- personal beliefs: high level of personal identification with the union;
- motivation: dedication to the task;
- technical competence: having the knowledge and skills to acquire new members.

In their training, in addition to getting acquainted with the necessary arguments and communication skills, it is useful to put special emphasis on the following points (SGIP, 10-13 p.; SIER, 9-12 p.):

- only those who are personally convinced are able to convince others;

- no person fits all: the conversation with the potential member should preferably be conducted by a friend or colleague who is working at a similar position in the company, that is, according to the specific assessment, it would be the union representative or another active member of the union;

- listening is as important as speaking;

- success does not always come on the first try.

At this point we come to the supporting arguments used to convince the potential members to join the union. They are vital because they play an important role in whether a potential member will join the union. At the same time, any objections made by potential members must be: a) heard and b) adequately addressed. The construction of the arguments itself is an ongoing process, which includes a large number of people. As early as the planning stage, the leadership needs to discuss and anticipate most of the possible questions of the prospective members and outline the answers that the members talking to them would respond with. For example, some of the questions could be along the lines of: Why do we need a union? What services will the union ensure? How much would it cost? What should I do? Would it put my career in danger? (International Federation of Journalists, 18 p.). Furthermore, the list of questions and answers should be honed during the process of training the trade union activists who would talk to potential members, based on their knowledge and valid arguments. One very important aspect that must be kept in mind is that the process of building arguments does not end here. The union activists involved in the recruitment of new members need to follow-up with feedback, both on the arguments they used that were most successful, as well as on those that were often contested.

Below, as an example, we will refer to several concerns that are frequently raised, citing arguments that can be used in response to them (see Saveski, 2016, pp. 49-50). Of course, it would be impossible to address all the comments that potential members could make here, not only due to the limited space, but also because, as we mentioned, the building of the arguments needs to be an ongoing process, involving a large number of people.

1) “I might lose my job if I join the union”. – It is one thing to have rational fear, and another thing to have exaggerated/irrational fear. It is one thing to not want to cross the street when it’s buzzing with cars. And it is quite another to not leave the house because you might get run over by a car. You should never go with your head against the wall. Yet silence is not gold, but an entryway into even greater exploitation and trampling of one’s rights. One should not go with one’s head against the wall, but neither should one remain silent on every occasion. It would be best to examine the limits of what is possible and distinguish between a realistic assessment of the possible repercussions and exaggerated fear. Moreover, do not easily succumb to the threats that “if we start demanding our rights, we will be fired”. Yes, some of us might get laid off. But only if we are not well-organized and we don’t stand as one. It is impossible to lay us all off (Milanovska-Manevska et al., 9 p.).

2) “Nothing will come of it” - Perhaps. And perhaps something will. How can we make things better in our own media outlet? Will we wait for the boss



to take mercy on us? A realistic assessment should be made as to whether, and to what extent, it is possible for things to change on their own, for the boss to take action, and whether things could start changing only if we take action. Sometimes thinking that things would change on their own, without us stirring them up, is simply a pipe dream. Nothing more than wishful thinking. It is true that there is no guarantee that we will succeed. But as they say - if you fight you may lose, but if you don't fight you've already lost. It is important to believe in our own strengths. When we have faith, our motivation increases and so does the likelihood that we will succeed. Why write off the belief that it is possible to bring about change with our own hands, and why should we place all our hopes in the fact that things will work out on their or that the boss will take mercy on us?

3) "No one will thank me for this". - This is absolutely true. If we succeed, the benefits of our success will be reaped by those who worked far less toward this goal, and even those who put obstacles on our way to success. And it is true that this can be disheartening. But that's exactly what the fight for one's labour rights literally is. Everyone makes an effort to make things better for everyone (including him/herself). We must not lose sight of the fact that the struggle to defend and promote our rights will have a positive effect, not only on those who didn't give so much of themselves and those who were bystanders, but also on those who took the lion's share of the fight. This should be the reward for their efforts. The words "thank you" may or may not come, but that is irrelevant. The main thing is to improve one's own rights. And let's try to emulate those who are better than us, not those who are worse.

When it comes to the violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to unionization (Article 37 of the Constitution of the RSM) by certain media employers, SSNM should: 1) emphasize, whenever they have the chance, what it is they are actually doing, notably, that they are putting themselves above the Constitution and that they are actively disrespecting and holding the highest legal instrument in the country in contempt; 2) send letters to all the media outlet managements asking them whether they comply with the right to unionization, as stipulated in Art. 37 of the Constitution of the RNM. And then publicly publish a list of media outlets that responded that they do not comply with the Constitution or that refused to respond to the letter; 3) during conversations with prospective members who express fears that they may face repercussions for joining the union, to point out to them that there is now a general shortage of workers in our country, including in the media industry. Especially since it is difficult to find good quality and hard-working journalists and media workers, the dismissal of such journalists and media workers would not only be bad for the media outlet's reputation (and SSNM would make a point to make this known), but it would also have a negative effect on the owner's profit.

Cohesion that breeds strength

The issue of cohesion, also part of the microlevel of trade union activity, receives far less attention, both in trade union literature and in trade

union practice, compared to the issue of recruiting new members. Of course, this can only be to the detriment of the unions. We will circle back to what we pointed out in the introductory part, namely, that in the absence of cohesion, the union's ability to take retaliatory action would suffer, when the opposing party demonstrates intransigence to union demands. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that this would not only have negative impact on the union's power of protest. It would inevitably have negative impact on its bargaining power. If it is unable to follow through on its threats with sanctions, the union would enter the bargaining with employers with an "unloaded gun", unable to show their teeth, which is not enough to succeed in defending and promoting labour rights (Saveski, 2015, p. 101).

The importance of cohesion can easily be observed once new members join the union. If the non-union worker has any doubts as to whether the other members of the union would be prepared, if push came to shove, to go as far as organize a strike if he/she was fired due to union activity or another unsubstantiated reason - he/she will not join the union. One for all and all for one. There is no other option. Either there will be cohesion, or the union will be an orchestra out of tune.

As a principle, the importance of cohesion is understood in trade union circles. One of the five principles of SSNM is reciprocity and solidarity (SSNM, Statute, Art. 8); "The Union Handbook for Journalists" states that members must feel that they are part of a group (International Federation of Journalists, p 31.); "The Manual on Workers' Rights" by KSS points out that "Where trade unions are most tightly knit, workers' rights are best upheld" (Milanovska-Manevska et al., p. 9.); the slogan: "Only united we stand in power" is featured at the top of the website of the Union of Clinical Hospitals (SSKC, website).

And yet, all too often, solidarity is understood as a platitude, as a word void of any meaning, as an empty slogan, as a performative isolated act. There is general distrust, not only in unions, not only in those who are in office, but also towards all the people in general and specifically towards one's colleagues in the workplace. Individualism reigns supreme among the workers. "Every man/woman for him/herself" is the legitimized behaviour of many, who think that they will improve their position "with submissive, half-hearted, spineless and obedient behaviour", regardless of the fact that "lost in that dead-end street with no way out, they can lose their personal and professional dignity" (SSNM, "Why You Should Become a Member").

In the previous section, we mentioned that the fact that trade unions gave up on the fight for values, as well as their self-perception as organizations that should only offer economic benefits to their members and workers, made the process of recruiting workers in their ranks more difficult in general, and further burdened the process of creating cohesion. Exactly as a result of them giving up on the fight for values, it became possible for workers to fully internalize the value system of the opposing party without any resistance, which, combined with the deliberate obliteration of solidarity between workers in the workplace, makes the workplace atomized. This has had, indeed, extremely beneficial consequences for any employer, as in-



dividually he/she is stronger than any separate worker, so once the workers are scattered, atomized and distrustful of each other, he/she can turn them against each one another and ensure that they would never become united to exert collective pressure on him/her that would put his/her profit under any threat. Things are so far removed from any normalcy that the commoning vocabulary is much more frequently used by employers (“our” company as “our family”) than by unions. And the self-perception that the union is some kind of transactional organization, that you pay membership for and receive something in return, is internalized to such an extent by some unions that, instead of talking about the benefits of joining the union, they advertise services to their members (Agrosindikat, website) or invite them to find out about the membership perks offered by the union (SSKC, website). In such a context, it should not be surprising that the workers themselves, including union members, see the union solely as a service provider, and understand their relationship to it as that between a buyer and a seller: the membership fee is paid in return for “services”. And that’s it. Any identification with the union is gone, while the point of personal contribution - is not understood at all.

The strength of the union lies in its numbers. But what would the strength of the union be if its members find the standpoints such as “the union is all of us together” and “each of us is extremely important in achieving the common goal” foreign to them? (Milanovska-Manevska et al., p. 11)

That is why it is important to seriously work on the cohesion in the trade union ranks. Consequently, the trade union should not be understood as an organization that offers only economic benefits to its members and to workers in general. That is why there must be no giving up on the fight for values. That is why the union must be built as a community, we must take ownership over it as an organization, as something that we are part of and that is part of us.

Cohesion is an indicator of the density of the union, of the compactness of its ranks, the unity between the members of the union, the closeness they feel to one another, the willingness to stand in solidarity with each other. The union must not be reduced to an atomized structure, where each member interacts in isolation with the management in a depersonalized relationship. A union can only be strong as a synergistic organization, where the collective power of its members is greater than the sum of their isolated individual powers. And it is cohesion that makes this synergy possible.

What is well understood in trade union circles is that it is not enough to have a large membership, but that it is necessary to have as many active members as possible. Yet, the following question inevitably arises: why should someone become an active member of a trade union? The explanation that is usually given goes along the lines of emphasizing that in this way one would improve the conditions at their workplace. But why shouldn’t the employee who wants to improve the conditions at his workplace simply be a member of the union, and the union would in turn provide him/her with better working conditions? Simply put, this is an explanation as to why

someone should be a member of a union, and not an active member. So once again we circle back to a deadlock. The union, in order to be strong and to be able to exert pressure toward defence and advancement of workers' rights, needs as many active members as possible, who will get involved and commit to its activities, who will apply themselves and encourage others to do so. Yet the motivation to be an active union member is poor. In order for one to be active in any organization, he should feel ownership over it, identify with it and its goals. And this cannot be ensured purely through economic calculation alone.

The ideological offensive of the opposing party was so successful among the trade unions in Macedonia (and most likely in the entire region of post-socialist countries), that it led to them becoming inhibited even to the extent of self-imposing a limit on themselves to matters related to the standard of living, fearing to even start talking about the quality of life of workers, both in the workplace and out of it. It is true that certain aspects of the quality of life, during work, are thematized: defending the dignity, absence of mobbing, reduction of stress in the workplace. But even then, there is no awareness that this is a matter related to the quality of life at the workplace. According to some, the union was "supposedly" bound to only deal with matters related to the standard of living. Moreover, the union was "supposedly" bound to treat humans exclusively as *homo economicus*, although even the opposing party does not always treat them so. The union "is supposed" to even be afraid to use the word "community", although the opposite party is allowed to talk about the company as a family. Yes, unions "were meant" to be weak and powerless and only have the power to implore the powerful to have mercy on them and allow them to exercise some figments of their rights.

If it wants to build cohesion, the union must not shy away from the word "community", but should strive to become a community itself, an organization that its members will feel attached to, where they will have a sense of belonging. Furthermore, it must not treat its members as economic automatons who are not interested in anything else than personal economic interest, but should start from the point of view of humans as social beings, who have a completely natural urge to get their other needs met, apart from the economic ones.

How to build cohesion, how to turn a union into a community? Of course, it is impossible to build cohesion overnight, it requires an ongoing process. And it must be built patiently. Yet, hand in hand with the process of building it, not only will the union members' satisfaction with being part of the union increase, but the union's power to achieve its program goals will also grow.

The union leadership and union representatives also have tasks when it comes to building cohesion. The leadership should:

- hold occasional meetings with the trade union organizations;
- organize seminars for the members of the union, bearing in mind that it is not only important for the topic of the seminar to



be useful to the members, but that their sense of belonging will be strengthened by spending time together;

- organize sports, games, environmental actions, outings etc., whereby, once again, one of the goals should be community building and better connections among the union members;

- keep a watchful eye to ensure that no line of division is beginning to emerge between union members, between supporters of different political parties, between people of different ethnicities, between journalists and media workers.

It is very important to understand that the forementioned activities must not be done purely to keep form, for the sake of crossing things off a list. This would not aid the cohesion. As we indicated above, only one who is personally convinced can convince others. Only a leadership that is aware of the importance of cohesion and which is aware that every activity of the union needs to be geared toward that goal, can create the atmosphere in which cohesion can be embodied.

Trade union representatives have an equally, of not more, important a task, in terms of building cohesion. In fact, one of the most important tasks of trade union representatives should be to build cohesion in their trade union organizations. This is something that the trade union leadership should clearly communicate with them and something they need to seriously commit to. One starting point could be the recommendation for trade union organizations to hold regular meetings, preferably once a month (International Federation of Journalists, p. 25). Of course, there will be no real need for the union organization to meet once a month under regular circumstances, but this could lead to either holding regular meeting that would largely be formal or having irregular meetings. None of these two options serve the advancement of the union. Still, things can be arranged in such a way so that if there is a need to hold a meeting, it will be held. And if there is no need for a meeting, the regularly scheduled time could be used for the members of the union to get together and socialize. One option is to go out for a coffee/beer, play a game of table tennis, basketball or do some other sports activity, take a hike in nature, or organize some kind of environmental action. There is an abundance of ideas. And the interval - once a month - is convenient enough for everyone to be able to make time for it. The union should not shy away from the questions related to the quality of life of its members. But it is important to note that these activities must be limited to union members. If a non-unionized co-worker likes the community spirit that the union builds, he/she can be included at any time by joining the union.

Furthermore, when it the employer's efforts to create an dispersed work environment, where the workers are isolated from each other and mistrust one another, the union should respond by building trust among union members through the union representative. Social activities, to a great extent, can increase camaraderie and friendship, whereas the spirit of encouraging mutual assistance, meeting the needs and mutual help among union members (within the workplace and outside) can have the same ef-

fect. And with the increase in camaraderie and friendships, the trust between union members will grow, which is of extreme importance when the union decides to organize industrial action against the intransigence of the opposing party. Trust, on the other hand, cannot be built overnight, once the decision to go on strike has been made. It must be fostered persistently long before the moment for such a decision comes.

And for the purposes of growth, both in terms of self-confidence and cohesion, it is important to raise the awareness that we, as union members, are not bystanders when it comes to our labour rights, that we have dared to become union members, and we are working towards everyone's good.

A union can be soulless. And I mean this in two ways – it can be a grey organization and it can be stunted. But it does have the ability to contribute to the quality of life of its members. And at the same time, to increase the power to achieve its program goals.

Recommendations

Amendments to laws and other legal acts:

- Advocacy by SSNM, independently and in cooperation with other unions, to amend Art. 46 of the Law on Labor Relations, in order to restore the revoked right for fixed-term contracts to last a reasonable period of time (between 9 and 12 months) or to be automatically transformed into permanent employment contracts after two fixed-term contracts expire (Art. 46, LLR) in order to, among other things, prevent the employer from retaliating for the union membership or activities of the employees by not extending their fixed-term contract.

- Advocacy by SSNM, independently and in cooperation with other trade unions, to amend Art. 200 p. 2 of the Law on Labor Relations, with a provision that will prevent the trade union representative from being downgraded at work (moved to a less favourable workplace with the same employer). Until then, the union representative's defence against this practice is the solidarity of his/her fellow union members and this should be clearly communicated to members.

- A provision should be introduced to SSNM's Statute, (for example, in Art. 22, on the trade union group), which will stipulate that the trade union representative undertakes activities to recruit new members in the trade union and to strengthen the cohesion between the members of the trade union, similarly to what is provided, for example, by SONK's Statute (Art. 28, SONK Statute). A new article, outlining the duties of the trade union representative, could also be introduced to the SSNM Statute.

Other recommendations

- Identifying the main objections by non-union SSNM workers (journalists and media workers who are not members of SSNM) as to why they have not joined the union and coming up with convincing responses that would effectively address their concerns. The SGIP/SIER manual, along with the present analysis, could serve as a starting point in that direction.

- To further hone or review the text on the SSNM website “Why you should become a member”, in terms of adding sub-headings, bolding the key words, and possibly addressing the main concerns of the non-unionized workers holding them back from joining the union.

- SSNM to send letters to all media outlet management boards, asking them the question whether they comply with the workers’ right to unionization, as stipulated in Art. 37 of the Constitution of the RNM. And then publicly publish a list of the media outlets that answered that they do not comply with the Constitution or that refused to respond to the letter.

- Increasing the visibility of the successes achieved by SSNM and drawing attention to those victories when recruiting new members in the union.

- In the process of recruiting new members, special attention should be paid to those media outlets where there are real prospects of achieving representativeness at employer level (20% of the number of employees working for that employer, in accordance with Art. 212 of the LLR).

- Wherever SSNM has its own trade union groups, efforts should be made for the members of the trade union group to elect their trade union representative and his/her deputy. By motivating them to do so, it should be made clear to union group members that they must stand behind their union representative, just as he/she must stand behind them if the employer tries to retaliate for union activities.

- Ongoing work on building cohesion, both by the leadership, by pointing out its importance, as well as by the union representatives by implementing activities that would build cohesion.

- Establishing communication and exchange of experiences between trade union representatives regarding their problems, but also regarding the positive experiences from the activities of their trade union group.

- Holding meetings between the leadership of SSNM with the trade union groups and their members on a regular basis, which should not be too frequent, but also not too infrequent.

- Wherever SSNM is the most numerous representative trade

union, to demand from the employers, according to Art. 199 of the LLR, to be provided with premises to undertake trade union activities and then to make efforts to bring the premises to life by organizing activities.

- Wherever SSNM has trade union organizations, the employer should be requested to put up a bulletin board or be given a part of the company bulletin board in order to increase the visibility of their activities.

- Printing, not only leaflets, brochures and publications, but also posters placed on the premises of the trade union, which, when necessary, can also be put up in public spaces.

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