

Unions: Relevant to the Past, Present, and Future

By Laura Groulx

To many, unions are the backbone to employment. They offer piece-of-mind to hard working employees and their families. With piece-of-mind, comes a sense of freedom; the freedom to worry and think about more important issues in one's life. Rather than stressing over work related issues, employees under the representation of a union have the ability to voice their opinions without fear of retribution. Workers have the right to voice their opinions, and to be heard in return. There is no question that unions are as relevant today as they ever have been.

To be clear, a union can be defined as an organization of workers that have joined together to protect both their common interests and working conditions. Unions offer an organized way for employees to meet together and discuss important issues such as wages, safer working conditions, benefits and future opportunities. Together, members of a union have the right to choose a representative to voice their concerns to those in power. Providing union members hold true to each other, they embody power themselves, which cannot be ignored by authorities. To be a part of a union, is to have power. With fellow members agreeing with personal views, desirable outcomes have a greater chance of becoming reality.

To truly appreciate the power of unions, perhaps it is necessary to consider working conditions without one. Without the support of a union, employees may be forced to work grueling hours at unfair wages. Because every employee represents only themselves, the idea of voicing complaints can be very intimidating. The presence of

intimidation can keep unsatisfied employees quiet, for they may fear the consequences of their deviant vocalizations. Even if complaints are made, there is no guarantee that actions will be made to improve conditions. A workplace without unions, is a workplace without power.

Besides unions being important to employees, they are important to employers as well. The implementation of better pay and working conditions make for more satisfied employees. Once employees are satisfied, a general improvement in productivity can occur. This improvement in productivity means that more work will get done in an admirable amount of time. If employees are given the tools to better take care of their families, through such things as health benefits, it will benefit society as a whole.

Another way in which unions benefit all of society is through the elimination of discrimination. Unions fight for fair wages and working conditions between all people. No matter one's colour, gender or physical state, they have the right to be treated equally. Within unions, further career opportunities are not limited to certain races or ethnicities, but are equally possible for all employees. This notion offers a sense of community and belonging which all people need to fulfill their social needs.

To conclude, the relevance of unions is not limited to employees, but extends to employers and society as well. For employees, unions offer a means for their voices to be heard. For employers, unions allow for a productive workplace. Finally, for society as a whole, unions offer a sense of comfort and acceptance. No matter which part of the triangle one belongs, unions can be seen as positive organizations making improvements towards the greater good.