

The Value of Unions in our Society



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Unionism in Canada started in the early 1800's. During the 1812 war, the Maritimes artisans created a union-type organisation. Canadian unionism then established links with Great Britain. Many unions established offices in Canada. In the end, Canadian unionism fell into line with the one in the United States. In those days, union activity was illegal therefore many union heads were arrested. Strikes forced the authorities to legalise union activity. A national convention in 1873 resulted in the creation of the first union organisation. Later, in 1883, the association changed its name to Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, which later became Canadian Labour Congress. In the early 1900's, there is an increase in the union movement: a work day is now 8 hours, there is recognition of the union movement, better salaries and the establishment of labor policies. When the work hours were reduced, the worker now had more time with his family since he was at home more than before. In 1975, the liberal government of Pierre E. Trudeau introduced a control of prices and salaries. Because of this new law, the wage increases are now required.

To unionize a company, the union representatives must meet with employees of the company to talk to them. Then, if they see a positive opportunity, they will ask for a vote. The vote is made with all employees who decide to go vote. If the result is at least 51% in favor of the movement, at that moment the employees become unionized.

The goal of the union is to negotiate fair rules for the employees to protect them and avoid abuse towards them. Unions make sure that the collective agreement and the current working conditions are respected and they make sure that there is no discrimination. Also, this avoids the exploitation of employees, particularly to younger employees because often the younger employees do not fight for their rights. Also, since the agreement was negotiated between the company and the employees, everyone finds their part in it. If there were no unions, there would be no laws and companies would have the right to decide on everything. Therefore, there would probably be many inequalities. Unionism therefore helps the companies to remain human.

In our society, the union's role is an essential service for the preservation of rights and of health and safety with the contract and with seniority. Collective agreements insured more secure work sites, which brought less life or limb loss. Plus, since the work hours are shorter, employees are less tired and can concentrate more and there are fewer accidents.

In closure, unions bring big changes in a company. They help with health and safety of employees by looking after their well-being. It is also what makes employees earn better salaries and a better quality of life at work. It is my opinion that it is important to have unions in a big company to control abuse and discrimination towards women, younger employees and people of different ethnicities or sexual orientation.