

The Value of Unions in our Society



Jessika Carroll,
Daughter of Eric
Carroll, Local 1-2010

Note: This essay was submitted in French. This is a translation of the original.

Like most people already know, unionism is the social and political movement of workers put in place to defend their interests by imposing changes and by transforming the production mode. On the other hand, what most of you don't know is the unionism was not always an easy and constant ensemble in business management. To begin, unionism in Canada only started in the 1800. During the war in 1812, maritime artisans established an organization similar to a Union. Afterwards, Canadians allied themselves to the people of Britain and established together a Union committee. This had a snowball effect and numerous Unions established offices everywhere in Canada. Canadian unionism aligned itself with unionism in the United States. At that time, unionism was an illegal activity so many members of the organisation were arrested. However, with strikes, authorities were forced to legalize unionism. In 1883, the association changed its name from "Trades and Labour Congress of Canada" to "Canadian Labour Congress". Later, in the early 1900s, the intensification of the Union movement was a huge change in business management. A work day was now 8 hours and better wages were established as well as labor policies. In 1975, Pierre E. Trudeau of the liberal government introduced wage control. Thus, with this new law, wage increases were now required. All of this thanks to the Union movement in businesses.

To have a unionized company, the Union representatives must first meet with the company members to discuss the benefits of a Union. And, if they believe that it is a positive opportunity for the workers, they will make a vote. If the results are more than 50% in favor, then the company will become unionized.

The objective of a Union is to negotiate fair agreements for the employees to protect them and to avoid abuse of power towards them. Unions fight to eliminate discrimination and assure the respect of the Collective Agreement and of the current working conditions. Furthermore, not only do they avoid the exploitation of all workers, but mostly for the youth since they rarely fight for their rights. If there is no Union committee, no law would be reinforced and employers would have the right to make all decisions. This said, the inequality rate would be inexplicable. Unionism therefore helps employers to stay sound.

In our society, the Union's role is an essential aspect for Companies that want to maintain the rights and the health and safety of the workers with the agreement and seniority. The Collective Agreements allow safe workplaces which lowers the rate of limb loss or even life loss. Furthermore, since the work hours are shorter, employees are less tired and therefore more concentrated and there are fewer accidents.

In conclusion, Unions bring many benefits to a Company. They help with worker health and safety by ensuring their welfare and decreasing the accident risks. And, thanks to Unions, employees have better wages and a better quality of life when at work. I agree 100% that it is important to implement a union in all companies to control the abuse of power and the discrimination against youth,

women, ethnic groups and those who have a different sexual orientation. In short, unionism is a revolutionary movement that improved the quality of life of workers, their health and safety as well as rightness in all workplaces.