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The Value of Unions in our society

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

Solidarity, that is the fundamental value of a union. It is in that way that unions gain strength. On the other hand, unions in the workplace do not always achieve unanimity. Yet they have permitted a constant evolution of the working class. A union can be defined as a social and political association of workers, organized to defend their interests, impose changes, and simply give a voice to the workers. Despite some beliefs that unions are there only to harm businesses, it is absolutely the opposite. Since their emergence during the industrial revolution of the 19th century, these associations have been crucial defenders of the rights of workers, fighting for fair working conditions, suitable wages, and benefits.

Firstly, unions play an important role for workers when the time comes to negotiate a work contract. Many advantages will be felt, among other things, a better remuneration. We can't forget that unionized employees generally have a higher salary than non-unionized employees. This gives a solid advantage to non-unionized workers who can use this as a comparison in the goal of achieving a more respectable salary. In the end, unions have a positive impact for everyone, and it is the society in general that benefits from them. The collective negotiation also allows to offer many advantages to its members like special leaves; bereavement, maternity, sick etc., a vacation pay with progressive rates during the years, a pension plan, and many health care benefits. All these advantages offer a better quality of life to employees and their families and allows a constant evolution of the economy.

Another important point that unions bring in the workplace is the implementation of rules to protect the workers. Many times, the unions and the company must work together to find an agreement for a regulation that is fair and above all safe for everyone. A concrete example of this is the law on health and safety at work. This law aims to eliminate all source of danger in the workplace that could hurt an employee. Unions also play an essential role in the respect of the collective agreement. They must protect their members, be it for discrimination, seniority, or all other work conditions not respected or illegal. Unions have the ability to ensure employees will have a loud voice in front of the company, by joining themselves collectively. Individually, employees can feel powerless towards problems like a unilateral rupture of a work contract, unpaid overtime hours or dangerous work conditions. If the employees don't communicate their worries to their employers because of their feeling of powerlessness, this could bring frustration, worry and discouragement at work. However, by uniting themselves and forming a union, workers can negotiate collectively with the employers, which gives them considerable strength to obtain significant improvements.

In conclusion, as we can see, the value of unions in our society is primordial. Unions are an important tool for everyone. They have allowed a voice to be given to the workers and also a constant evolution of the working class and the economy. Without the unions, the workers would never have been able to fight against the inequality and achieve a personal well-being. It is important that unions pursue their mission and continue to be part of our lives because UNITY IS STRENGTH.