



Miguel Breaux,
Fils de Pierre
Breaux, Columbia
Plywood

The Value of Unions in our Society

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

Since the beginning of civilisation there has been a division between the elite minority and the middle class. With time this division accentuates, bringing growing inequalities and injustices. To counter this the working class reunited to form a coalition to guarantee their rights at work. This organization was put to the test during the great depression, mobilizing its members to counter the present injustices, ensuring to support the common interests of the salaried by orchestrating petitions and manifestations and ensuring that employers respect the regulations put in place by government agencies.

Firstly, monopolies took advantage of the circumstances during the great depression to incite its employees to neglect their security at work. During the great depression, work shortage incited employees to tolerate bad conditions to preserve their financial security. This way of proceeding brings an increased injury rate in employees that feel obligated to increase their performance by omitting their own security to increase the production speed. Many employees, dissatisfied with these conditions, met to organize a common platform relating to the members' interests. In brief, this unionization led to the eventual adoption of the norms of working conditions.

Secondly, unions have knowledge and tools necessary to improve the work climate. Among the tools used, unions have access to the expertise of professionals that supports them with their negotiations, their manifestations techniques to affirm themselves to their employers and their protestations to have the public opinion heard and bring validity to the voice of their members. These tools can be used to ensure equity at work, which is essential for the good operation of the business. Furthermore, these pressures from the majority invites the adoption of new laws that increases the well-being of the employees. In short, thanks to unions, the employer must conform to the requirements of the working class when it comes to health and safety.

Thirdly, the union allows to ensure that the company applies the laws put in place by the government and that the employer conforms to all requirements agreed to in their agreements. The union has close communications with the employees, letting them represent adequately the interests of everyone when establishing the collective agreement. When an employee has a complaint, the union has the necessary knowledge to address the employee's concerns with the employer, allowing a consensus between the two parties. Furthermore, the union ensures the job security of its members by ensuring that the company follows the appropriate steps before firing someone. Moreover, the union gives tools to an employee victim of a workplace injury, ensuring that he gets an adequate compensation. To conclude, if there were no unions, the employer could impose whatever he wants to his employees, and they wouldn't be able to refuse.

In conclusion, unions are necessary in our society since they have the tools necessary to defend the interests of the workers by ensuring that the employer follows the requirements put forward by the government. The value that brings the union to the society by representing the working class in their demands is immense, allowing a continual reform of the standards for the health and safety at work. We just need to realise that no other organization has had as much influence on the working standards to understand the importance of unions in our society.