

Organized Labour for Future Generations Erica Chant

Many labour laws and regulations that we accept as standard today can be attributed to organized labour. Majority of the safety regulations, wage increases and fair working hours that we know would not stand without the work of unions. The steady and unfortunate downward trend in union membership suggests there is a possibility that the next generation of workers will see the demise of unions. I however, believe, when young people fully grasp the benefits of unionized work, membership will increase. The downfall of organized labour would be detrimental as it substantially benefits workers in all sectors and even the general public through their efforts towards stable schedules, safety practices, and job security. I foresee organized labour to be essential in maintaining and implementing safety practices, securing fair working conditions through collective bargaining and protecting workers by allowing them to self advocate. With strong membership and representation, unions may stand the test of time and continue to do outstanding work in representing the working class where they need it most. As a new generation of workers enter the workforce, they will see how imperative unionization is and I believe there will be a growth in members.

Much of the health and safety regulations that stand in place in working environments can be attributed to the decades long work of unions and organized labour. While union membership may be declining, there would be severe and detrimental consequences to the workplace without having an organized body to fight for safety regulations being implemented and upheld. Unions have fought and continue to fight for safe and healthy workplaces for over a century. Without these safety practices, there would be a staggering increase in workplace accidents. When unions fight for appropriate break times and proper hours, it creates a safer work environment. Overworked employees create an unnecessary hazard in the workplace which can be avoided thanks to the work of the union in ensuring that employees are working appropriate hours. Thankfully, due to union protection, unionized workers are much more likely to report workplace accidents which contributes to an overall safer and healthier workplace for everyone. Not only do unions protect workers from retribution after reporting accidents, they also provide education thus making the workplace exponentially safer. By encouraging workers to keep their education current, they are helping to ensure safety for all. In recent years, technology has developed at an accelerated rate, faster than ever before. With these new developments, the workplace is invariably evolving equipment and procedures, therefore making it even more important to have a union encouraging and providing education. When new equipment and technology is introduced, new safety practices need to be implemented which makes unions vital when fighting for new regulations. Overall, workplace safety is extremely important and going forward it will only become more important. Unions are absolutely essential in securing safe working conditions in an ever evolving workforce.

Among many other things, unions collectively negotiate for better working conditions. This work aids in finding mutually beneficial terms for both the employer and employee. These

negotiations include, but are not limited to, benefits, pay, holidays and schedules. With these negotiations, unions have helped to develop a stronger work life balance and allowed workers to prioritise their families and personal lives. With better schedules, benefits and pay, workers are able to better provide for their families and have an overall better quality of life. By fighting for better pay, leave and holidays, unions help to improve the lives of workers by allowing them to lead a more fulfilling and enriching life outside of work. When workers are able to take sufficient breaks from the workplace and spend time doing things they enjoy, it increases morale, betters the mental health among employees and allows for a positive attitude as a whole in the workplace. If there is no union to fight for fair pay and benefits, there would be very little improvement in working conditions or the workplace. Employees perform better when they are given sufficient breaks and aren't overworked which also contributes to the safety on a work site. Overall working conditions and the lives of workers would greatly suffer without having a union to support them and negotiate for the best possible working conditions.

Unions empower workers to self advocate and speak up when something isn't right. By protecting workers from retaliation and retribution, unions help to develop a better sense of power among workers. Without that protection, workers would often shy away from reporting incidents and fail to protect themselves from injustices in the workplace. By providing support for employees, unions help develop a solid sense of security among employees which helps them fight for their rights. I believe that the next generation of workers will fight for their own rights as well as the rights of others. They will want to close the wage gap, ensure equality in the workplace regardless of gender or race and provide job security in an ever changing world. The next generation of workers have lived through a global pandemic, the fight to end climate change and a revolutionary social movement during their formative years. The youth that will soon be taking over the workforce are a generation that isn't afraid to fight for change and stand up for their beliefs. With organized labour on their side, there is a high likelihood of achieving what other generations haven't been able to. I believe that young workers will recognize the importance of organized labour and how imperative to fighting for their rights in the workplace.

Without organized labour, the workplace would be much more hazardous, employees would have a poorer quality of life and self advocacy in the workplace would decrease. While union density may be low, organized labour is imperative to the working class. With technology and equipment continuously evolving, it is imperative to have a union fighting for new safety regulations as practices in the workplace change. Going forward, I believe the working class will rely heavily on unions to secure acceptable working conditions through collective negotiations. As a new generation of workers enters the workforce, I foresee that young people will desire the security that can be provided by unions and membership will increase.