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The Importance of Unions

Unions in Canada began in the late nineteenth century. They were used for labourers and workers to collectively bargain against employers to ensure adequate working conditions. Before they officially started, labourers would gather together and think about the quality of their work. They would judge how they were being treated by their employer and perhaps compare that to how other employers were treating their workers. They would then decide whether or not to attempt a strike. The threat of strike was used to get something out of employers. The employer would face the risk of his employees all leaving at once and shutting down production. He would balance that risk against the demands, which could vary from better health conditions in a factory to better pay. He would then decide what to do. Maybe he would prevent strike by a small concession of the demands, or a total concession of the demands, or perhaps the strike threats would die down organically. This would have been the informal model of union representation being through the workers themselves, as the concept of unionism would progress into officially recognized unions there would be a gradually increasing bureaucracy to handle union matters. The idea of an official and constant union representing workers is justified due to the potential strength of an employer, they have a lot of the power in the relationships, especially again any single individual who might bring up complaints. This is why the collective nature of unions is paramount, you need almost everyone to buy into the union in a factory for example in order to credibly threaten a strike. If half of workers aren't in the union and thus refuse to strike, the factory can probably continue operations at a decent level, but if 90% of workers strike, the factory probably cannot function.

I think unions are important because both of my parents are in them. They help my parents' job security and decent working conditions. They also protect my parents so they can take adequate breaks like weekends and holidays. They will support my parents if any complaints are issues by or at them. Unionism being pervasive also creates an environment wherein processes and infrastructure surround individuals to protect them from unjustified attacks or demands.

For me, I know that my parents are safe in their jobs because they are in unions. They can't be baselessly gotten rid of, they can feel safe with the security the union provides. They also have someone who can help them get through tough times if that happens.

I know that unions can help make people feel like they are not walking around on eggshells in their jobs. Unions could also help make a better work environment and probably increase productivity because workers are less afraid to speak up for what they think might be a good idea. If there is somewhat of a safety net on your job, you can maybe make some suggestions to your employer that you wouldn't have otherwise made for fear of repercussion.