

UNIONS

New employees are often asked to join a union after a few months of service on their job. It is important for the new employee to know how a union functions.

A shop steward is a union representative who works with the employee. He is able to help the worker learn how the union aids the employee. His fellow workers elect the shop steward. He checks on working conditions and safety hazards. He also acts as the go-between when an employee has suggestions or complaints to give to the employer.

An open shop is a company, which allows its members to choose whether or not they want to join a union. A closed shop is a company that requires its members to belong to the union.

A union makes sure working hours is reasonable. It bargains for higher wages. Unions often write safety rules. Fringe benefits (vacation, sick leave, medical coverage, etc.) are provided because of union negotiations. Paid vacations and coffee breaks are the result of union-employer agreements. Medical disability insurance is provided and employees are given job protection because of agreements with the union.

Job protection protects the worker and makes sure he is not fired unfairly. It also provides seniority privileges for workers who have many years of service with the company. Some privileges are:

1. Senior worker is the last to be laid off
2. Longer vacations
3. Better chances for promotion
4. Higher pay
5. Retirement

Union dues are collected to help keep the union running (dues and date of payment vary). Monthly meetings help the worker to be aware of union plans and to be able to vote on current problems.

When the employees' contract runs out, the union bargains for better wages and working conditions. If the employer refuses to give the employees what they ask for, the union may call a strike (employees stop working) until the employer meets the workers' demands.

The labor union represents the worker. A special day, Labor Day (the first Monday in September), is set aside as a holiday to honor the workingman.

Answer the following questions:

1. What does a union do for its members? _____

2. What is job protection? _____

3. What are seniority privileges? _____

4. How and when does a union call a strike? _____

5. How can a shop steward help a fellow worker on the job? _____

6. What is an “open shop?” _____

7. What is a “closed shop?” _____

8. Labor unions in the San Bernardino/Riverside areas are responsible for establishing many of the laws, which govern the conditions that you will work under. Name five local unions and describe the types of workers who belong to them. This information can be found in the notebook on Apprenticeships in the Career Guidance Center or on the Internet.

Union

Workers

Example: _____ Teamsters _____

_____ Truck Driver _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
