

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF UNIONS

- **Unions are corrupt:** Several studies have been done that have demonstrated that less than 1% of locals had corruption problems. Contrast this with a 1980 investigation into corporate corruption by Fortune magazine that found that corporate corruption ran at 11%.
- **American laws already protect workers enough:** Think again! Without a union or a bargained contract, U.S. law considers all workers "At Will" employees. Simply stated, an "at will" worker can legally be fired at any time and for no reason ... totally at the will and mercy of the employer!. Only a bargained contract gives you the same "due process" rights at work you have as a citizen generally.
- **Unions only protect bad workers:** Without a union or a contract, your employers can fire you for no reason or just a suspicion, anytime they want. A Union contract generally requires: 1. that in a layoff, you go by seniority; or 2. that the employer has to prove "just cause" to fire or discipline you.

We believe that protecting seniority also protects experience and expertise. Those are good things!.

"Just cause" just means the employer has to have convincing proof that a worker has done something wrong before he ruins someone's career. What's so bad about that? The truth is that bad workers are usually protected by bad or lazy management. All the Union does is make sure the employer has proof.

- **You won't be able to talk to your managers about problems:** Even if unions wanted to stop you from talking to managers about problems (and why on earth would they?) federal law mandates that you have the right to go to a manager with a problem without union representation.

Management will often complain that unions limit their "flexibility." But think about it: in their idea of "flexibility" who is always flexing, and who is being flexed? Do they really mean "flexibility," or do they just want to be free to be arbitrary and capricious?

- **Unions would lead the company into bankruptcy:** Unions do not ask for more in a contract than a company can afford. They know that the worst possible disservice that a union could do to its membership is to drive the company they work for out of business. In fact, during hard financial times, most unions will do everything in their power to help companies stay in business. The most famous example of this is the Chrysler bailout in the 80's - pressure from both Chrysler and the UAW led the federal government to give Chrysler the loans that saved the company. Also, concessions during this time by the union enabled Chrysler to turn the corner and become one of the most profitable companies in the world today.

- **The union will be like having another boss:** Actually, management reserves all "boss" functions (management's rights) in a contract. So you won't have to check with "the union" to go on vacation, justify being late, or any hiring or firing situations. What the union does do in these situations is to advocate for you if you feel that management's decisions are unfair. For example, if you aren't given a vacation you deserve, the union will do what it can to rectify the situation working with management. (The process by which they do this, known as the grievance procedure, is spelled out in the contract.)
- **You won't be able to afford the dues:** Union dues usually range between two and five hundred a year, depending on the industry, the union, etc. Union members set their own dues amounts so together you can effectively insure that gains in the contract will be more than the amount paid per month in dues. It's your union, and you can have a voice. Look around! Think how much less you're making without a union. That difference is the "non-union dues" you're already paying to your employer.
- **You'll have to go on strike:** Strikes are actually very rare. The chances that you'll go on strike over any given contract is about the same as the chances of the space shuttle blowing up at any given launch. (1 to 2%) The chances are much, much greater that you will end up with a fair contract. The only reason strikes leap to mind is that business' stress the fact that they could happen in order to scare employees, the media loves to cover them, and the labor movement glorifies them. (Understandable, I guess. Signing contracts lacks the drama. I can see my grandfather now: "Yessir, I remember the great contract signing of '34.)

Of course, the best way to avoid misconceptions and rumors is to go talk to employees who are currently under a contract with your local union. Go to a few stores or plants, talk to a few employees in each. Ask them if they like the union and if they are better off with it than without. It's worth the effort.