

Forum: SDG 8 Council

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Topic 1: The issue of worker unions

I. Introduction to the topic

Employees in a range of industries voluntarily organize worker unions, also known as trade unions or labor unions, to represent their interests collectively and negotiate with employers for better working conditions, equitable pay, and enhanced benefits to promote sustainability amongst working citizens. Workers are able to voice their concerns, defend their rights, and use collective bargaining power to influence management or corporate decisions through the use of these unions.

The foundation of worker unions lies with the idea of solidarity, which holds that groups of workers have more power and influence than individuals acting alone. Workers can collectively bargain for better pay, safer working conditions, appropriate work hours, and other advantages that promote their general well-being by banding together. By acting as a unified voice for employees, unions make sure that employers and legislators are aware of and responsive to their issues. Collective bargaining, worker representation in disputes and negotiations, and promotion of labor rights and laws that advance the interests of employees are the main duties of worker unions.

Worker unions also play a crucial role in addressing workplace grievances and conflicts. They provide support and representation for individual workers during disputes, ensuring their rights are protected and advocating for fair resolutions. Unions can also facilitate the resolution of disputes through mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration, minimizing the need for costly litigation.

II. Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Definitions of Key Terms

Collective bargaining: The process through which employers and unions negotiate to come to an agreement on employment terms, including pay, benefits, working conditions, and schedules.

Union Dues: Regular payments provided by union members to support the activities and administration of the union. The standard form of dues is a portion of the member's salary.

Strike: A collective action done by unionized workers to withhold their labor in an effort to push employers to comply with their demands. Strikes can cause everything from complete shutdowns to minor work stoppages.

Labor Contract: A legally enforceable contract outlining the terms and conditions of employment for the employees covered by the contract is known as a labor contract. It contains clauses covering pay, benefits, working hours, grievance processes, and other aspects of employment.

Grievance Procedure: A formal procedure outlined in labor agreements to discuss and settle issues or grievances brought forward by employees against employers. It offers a way for employees to file a complaint about claimed rights or contract violations.

Unionization: The process through which employees band together to form a union and enlist as members is known as unionization. By joining a union, employees can collectively bargain and participate more actively in workplace decision-making.

Labor Legislation: Government-enacted laws and rules that specify the duties and responsibilities of employees, employers, and unions are known as labor laws. Although labor laws differ from nation to nation, they frequently address topics including collective bargaining, minimum salaries, working hours, health and safety requirements, and protection from unfair labor practices.

Union Density: The proportion of workers who belong to a union in a certain industry, sector, or nation. The strength and impact of unions within a workforce or society are gauged by the density of their membership.

Trade Union Confederation: An umbrella group that represents and unifies the operations of several unions within a nation or a region. Trade union federations frequently promote workers' rights on a more general level and offer assistance and resources to their member unions.

III. Key Stakeholders

Workers: The main stakeholders in worker unions are workers, or union members. They join unions in order to jointly advocate for their rights, safeguard their interests, negotiate for better pay and working conditions, and deal with concerns at work. Employees take part in union activities, choose leaders, and engage in decision-making.

Union Leaders: Union leaders who advocate the interests of union members include presidents, officers, and executive board members. They are in charge of negotiating labor agreements, planning strikes or protests when necessary, and overseeing the union's general activities. On behalf of the employees, union leaders engage in communication with employers, public officials, and other parties.

Government: The government has a significant role in worker unions at all levels (local, regional, and national). It creates and upholds labor laws and rules that have an effect on

union operations and worker rights. Governmental organizations may monitor collective bargaining procedures, resolve labor disputes, and guarantee adherence to labor laws. Additionally, government representatives may communicate with unions to comprehend the issues that affect employees and create labor-related regulations.

Community and Public: The general public and the community also have a role in labor unions. They assist unions by taking part in protests, giving money during strikes, or showing sympathy for the causes of workers. Governmental decisions and the general impression of unions can be influenced by public opinion.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Wages and Benefits: Striving for fair salaries and benefits for their members is one of the main priorities for worker unions. This is negotiating with employers for greater pay, better healthcare benefits, retirement benefits, paid time off, and other privileges.

Working Conditions: To safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of employees, unions frequently concentrate on improving working conditions. This can entail promoting shorter workdays, ergonomic enhancements, appropriate safety procedures, and sufficient breaks.

Job Security: Worker protection from arbitrary layoffs, unjust terminations, and job insecurity is a goal of unions. They bargain for provisions that safeguard jobs, such as seniority rights, fairness in disciplinary proceedings, and protections against offshore and outsourcing.

Legislative and Policy Advocacy: Worker unions engage in political advocacy in order to change labor laws, rules, and regulations that affect the rights of workers. They might advocate for legislation that supports workers, press for higher workplace standards, and fight for social and economic fairness.

Social and Economic Issues: Some unions focus on more extensive social and economic issues outside of the workplace. They might support causes like income inequality, healthcare reform, and environmental sustainability.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Timeline	Event
1886	Haymarket Square Riot rallied for an 8 - hour workday, gave way for the establishment of the American Federation of Labor, and also raised awareness regarding labor rights for workers.
1919	The International Labor Organization was established as a part of the Treaty of Versailles as a specialized agency
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights's Article 23, which 192 Member States of the UN, was passed, presenting labor rights and rights to work union as an essential right for humans
1980	The Solidarity Movement in Poland from 1980 to 1989 marks the first independent labor movement in a country to defend and advocate for workers' rights
1998	Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted by the International Labor Organization, which upholds the fundamental rights for workers
2012	The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is formed, representing national trade union centers from around the world and advocating for workers' rights and interests

VI. Possible challenges and solutions

Wages and Benefits: As worker unions approach the issue of fair wages and benefits via negotiation with employers so that it can improve financial stability, increased job satisfaction and higher quality of life, employers might be concerned about the potential impact of their profit and competitiveness and also less ability to create and pay for new job opportunities, which are very essential factors in driving economic growth. To tackle this, unions can engage in collective bargaining to find mutually beneficial solutions or advocate for increases in minimum wages laws at the legislative level to promote fair and liveable wages for workers.

Working Conditions: Enhanced working conditions might contribute to the increasing of costs for employers, which potentially impact job creation, thus economic growth as improving working conditions requires investment in areas including but not limited to remuneration, benefits, safety. These investments directly affect the employer's economy, thereby limiting abilities to expand the workforce or create new job opportunities and impeding overall economic progress. Solutions can be collaboration with employers to establish joint committees that focus on improving working conditions and opening spaces for collective bargaining and problem solving.

Job Security: Unions play an important role in projecting workers' job security as job security serves to prevent unjust and arbitrary layoffs for workers. However, judging from an employee's perspective, while they can provide stability for workers, they might also hinder employee's flexibility to adapt and their choices to change in markets and potentially limit innovation and competitiveness. Negotiation for the inclusion of employment protection

clauses including but not limited to safeguard against arbitrary layoff in collective bargaining agreements and advocating for labor laws that protect workers from unfair labor practices.

Legislative and Policy Advocacy: While legislative and policies support worker rights, promote higher standards for workplaces, and fight for social and economic justice, it can also alleviate the pressure and burden on employers that potentially affect business viability and hinder economic growth. Unions can raise awareness regarding important labor issues and build public support.

Social and Economic Issues: Various worker unions extend their focus beyond the workplace to address broader social and economic issues; these contribute to shaping a more equitable and just society, especially for workers. However, these efforts might intersect with political debates and face several oppositions from those with differences in policies and political views. One solution that can be implemented is investing in policy research and analysis to develop evidence-based recommendations and proposals that address social and economic challenges, providing scientific and reliable insights for stakeholders and policymakers.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

Liberal Democratic States:

For liberal democratic states such as the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Kingdom of Sweden, advocating for this topic is recommended, as there are a number of laws regarding worker unions. The following countries and other democratic states have historically tended to show favor for the creation and organization of worker unions, thus promoting liberal ideologies. Delegates should focus on working with other liberal democratic states and other potentially relevant or neutral states in order to promote ideologies such as improving worker conditions, removing gender pay gaps, and equal pay.

Authoritative Totalitarian States:

For authoritative totalitarian states such as the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, resolutions advocating against this topic are recommended, as these states tend to go against the creation of worker unions or promote government initiatives that go against the fundamental inquiries of worker unions. Delegates should focus on working with other authoritative totalitarian states and other potentially relevant or neutral states, as they tend to go against the ideologies of worker unions.

VIII. Bibliography

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