

## LESSON 12: THE PERCEPTION OF UNIONS

### Lesson aim:

- To assess and develop students' own views of trade unions.
- To enhance students' understanding of the role of the media in reporting workplace issues.

### Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- explain their opinion of unions and the source; and
- compare and comment on the role of the media in relation to union issues.

### Lesson outline:

Begin this lesson by asking:

- Where did you first hear about unions? Was it positive or negative? What is your view of unions? Where did this view come from?
- What do you know about unions? Where has this information come from?
- When unions are mentioned in the media, what is your opinion of them? What do you hear others say about unions? Why do you think this is so?

Give students 15 minutes to think about the questions on their own, jotting down their answers and a brief explanation of them. Then form groups of five or six students to discuss the questions further. Each group should summarise their discussions and nominate one member to report back to the entire class. The lesson can end with students identifying what they have learned from this exercise.

### Class activity: Research and discussion

Ask students to bring in newspapers and magazines that contain articles on workplace and union issues. Ensure there is a good spread of both broadsheets and tabloids including Sunday papers (teachers can add to the publications as they see fit).

Divide the students into groups providing them with different types of publications. They should look for articles related to unions and workplace issues. They should review the papers in terms of:

- the spread and number of stories;
- content and tone of the article; and
- treatment and perspective of the same story across papers.

### Discuss

- Are articles regarding workers common across newspapers? What is your opinion of the article? What is your feeling on first reading the article? Explain.
- Do you think the newspaper gives an accurate account of the situation?
- Is the story reported in a positive or negative way?
- How would you go about finding another perspective on these stories?

### Assignment: Research

- Find an alternative perspective regarding the story.
- Request the facts of the situation directly from the union involved.

### Analysis

- Compare the original article with any additional facts you may have gathered.
- Was there anything added or omitted from the article? Why do you think this was?
- Has your own opinion on the article changed? Why?
- Based on the information obtained, was the article an accurate reflection of the situation? Explain your answer.
- What have you learned from this exercise?