

LESSON 2: UNION MEMBERSHIP AND BENEFITS

Lesson aim:

- ✚ To provide students with an understanding of how and why workers join unions.

Learning objectives:

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

- ✚ compare a union and non-union environment and explain the differences; and
- ✚ list the benefits of union membership.

Lesson outline:

Discuss with students the difference between a union and non-union environment. Brainstorm what the differences might be.

- ✚ Ask students to list the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- ✚ Using the list they have constructed ask them to prioritise their points and explain the reasons behind their choice.
- ✚ Divide the class into groups and ask each to list the benefits that they might get as union members (refer to “Benefits of membership” section).

Assignment: Individual project

Students should prepare questions to find out the different experiences of friends and family members who are employed in union and non-union environments. The following can be used as a guide and can be added to as appropriate:

- ✚ What is their occupation or place of work?
- ✚ What entitlements and benefits do they have (holidays, promotion, rates of pay, sick leave, overtime, training, etc)?
- ✚ How are workplace changes handled? Do they have a say in any changes?
- ✚ What are the main issues they have at work?

- ✚ Who do they speak to about these issues or if they have problems at work?

Based on what they have found out students should:

- ✚ Highlight any differences they have found.
- ✚ What issues were not mentioned that you think unions could deal with?
- ✚ How could joining a union help with some of the issues raised?
- ✚ Do they think young workers have similar issues?
- ✚ What surprised them and what they have learned from this exercise?

Assignment: Write to a union

Write to a union of your choice asking them to outline the reasons why they should join and the benefits they would receive as union members. Are they doing anything specifically for young workers?