**Unions 101**

**Question 1:** What is an association of workers that collectively improve their working conditions?

**Answer:** a union

**Explanation:** This is the general definition of a labor union. Other names may include: association, trade union, labor union Spanish: sindicato French: syndicat

**Question 2:** What types of workers have unions?

**Answer:** all of the above + more

**Explanation:** Factory workers and trades workers, as well as other blue-collar workers are the more traditionally unionized groups of workers. This is also the reason that these workers achieved and maintained high wages and protections. In more recent years, other types of workers such as teachers, nurses, graduate and undergraduate students, flight attendants, and actors have unionized.

**Question 3:** What gives workers the right to form a union?

**Answer:** The National Labor Relations Act

**Explanation:** The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) was passed in 1935 and protected the right to organize unions. It also created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to implement the Act.

**Question 4:** Why do union members pay dues?

**Answer:** to pay for union organizing, to pay for legal fees, to negotiate higher wages, to offer protections to workers

**Explanation:** Labor unions are constantly under attack and it takes time and resources to fight back and to protect workers. Union dues are used to fund organizing new workers into unions, pay for lawyers to advise and represent workers, and pay union staff to help negotiate contracts. Signing up as a union member and paying dues also signals to the employer that employees care about the union and want to negotiate wages and working conditions.

**Question 5:** What benefits do union workers have?

**Answer:** they have higher wages + more legal protections

**Explanation:** Union workers have higher wages on average than their non-union counterparts. Union workers also can bargain for protections such as just cause for firing (meaning they can’t be fired for no reason), non-discrimination, health and safety, and more.

**Question 6:** What is the legislation that allows workers to benefit from the union without paying dues?

**Answer:** Right-to-Work, Janus v. AFSCME

**Explanation:** Right to Workis the broader ideology that attempts to attack unions and the working class. Janus v. AFSCME was a supreme court case that made all public-sector unions “right to work.”

**Question 7:** Do unions participate in electoral politics?

**Answer:** Yes, and political causes vary among different unions.

**Explanation**: Unions have a history of being very political organizations. Political opinions differ among unions and within unions themselves. Most labor unions engage in politics in some way including organizing around certain candidates, supporting candidates for office, and creating coalitions to pass legislation at the local or federal level.

**Question 8:** How are unions run?

**Answer:** Mostly democratic + members make organizational decisions

**Explanation:** All unions run differently. Most unions embrace the phrasing that “members are the union” and it holds true in their practices, with members making organization decisions and having the ultimate say. Unions also hold elections of local office to handle day-to-day operations and represent the membership.

**Question 9:** Can workers be fired for joining a union or starting one?

**Answer:** No, section 7 of the NLRA protects them from this

**Explanation:** The NLRA makes it illegal for employers to discriminate against employees for joining or supporting a union. Nonetheless, it can still happen especially during the formation of a new union, but the union will fight for the worker using legal services paid by membership dues.

**Question 10:** Do you want to join a union?

**Answer:** I want to form one! I still have to think about it

**Explanation:** You can form a union! It is your right under the NLRA. Make it a summer project.