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# Unions

Their history and what they Do

# Unions - History

*“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if Labor had not first existed. Labor is superior to capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.”—Abraham Lincoln*

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# Unions – History

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- A trade union is an organization of workers who have united together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of their trade, achieving higher pay and benefits such as health care and retirement, safety standards, and better working conditions.
- The trade union bargains with the employer on behalf of union members (rank and file members) and negotiates labour contracts (collective bargaining) with employers.
- The most common purpose of these associations or unions is "maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment".

# Unions - History

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- Earliest unions established in the 19th century. As New Zealand economically and industrially developed, workers became more organised. Similar to the United Kingdom, skilled workers and tradesmen had their own closed craft unions and associations to represent them.
- Unskilled workers were also increasingly joining together and forming unions in the factories, shops, the railways, in the mines and on the wharves to protect and further their conditions. As unions grew in numbers and influence they were subsequently provided with legal recognition in the 1870s.
- The conditions within the garment industry also resulted in the development of a Tailoresses Union which was formed to protect the pay and conditions of the women. The Tailoresses Union was reflective of the development of a number of other Unions and working class organisations at the same time.
- Unions well established in New Zealand by 1890.

# Unions - History

## Very long history of opposition to Unions

- Employers and their allies have tried to undermine unions throughout their history
- A large proportion of the present workforce is not unionised.
- Some workers object to unions by claiming:
  - “I’ve been a member before – the union didn’t do much for me.”
  - “I can look after myself.”
  - “I don’t want to always be on strike.”
  - “I can’t afford it.”
  - “My mates/wife/partner/dad/mum say unions only cause trouble.”
  - “I’m just a casual.”
  - “I get all the benefits anyway – I don’t need to join.”

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- Trade unions and collective bargaining were outlawed from no later than the middle of the 14th century when the Ordinance of Labourers was enacted in the Kingdom of England.
- As collective bargaining and early worker unions grew with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the government began to clamp down on what it saw as the danger of popular unrest at the time of the Napoleonic Wars.
- By the 1810s, the first labour organizations to bring together workers of divergent occupations were formed. Possibly the first such union was the General Union of Trades, also known as the Philanthropic Society, founded in 1818 in Manchester. The latter name was to hide the organization's real purpose in a time when trade unions were still illegal.

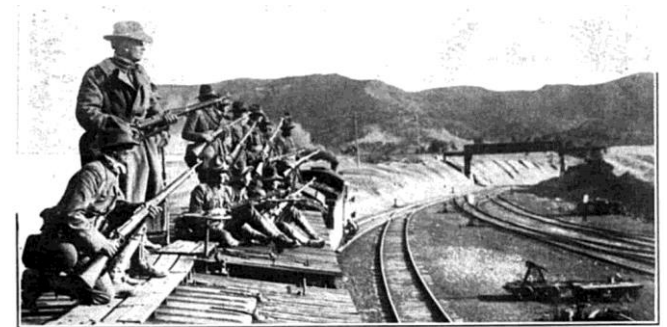
# Unions - History

- Two incidents of hostility toward workers
  1. Peterloo (1819) - Armed Calvary used to bring up a meeting of 60,000 people calling for democratic rights for workers and common people.
  2. Ludlow – Miners went on strike for better pay and conditions at the Ludlow Mine. The State Governor ordered in troops and strike breakers to break the union and its members.

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MEMBERS OF THE COLORADO NATIONAL GUARD ENTERING THE STRIKE DISTRICT



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Incidents of hostility not limited to Overseas

- General Strike of 1913- Drawn out dispute with workers and Unions regarding pay and conditions. Army and strike breakers called out and union leaders arrested.
- 1951 Waterfront Lockout – Workers locked out by employers. Strike called and quickly spread. Government introduced emergency powers to cull unions. Union leaders arrested.
- 1991 Employment Contracts Act – National Government passed new legislation which completely excluded Unions.



# Unions - History

Despite the opposition Unions have achieved the following:

- Equal pay for men and women.
- 4 weeks annual leave (2007)
- Additional leave for shifts
- Additional annual leave for service
- Long service leave
- Negotiated pay increases
- Collective Agreements protecting workers terms and conditions of employment
- Penal pay for evening, night work and weekend work
- Paid public holidays (1955)
- Penal pay for working public holidays (plus paid day in lieu)
- Parental leave (13 weeks paid – 14 from 1/12/2005)
- Protective clothing and equipment provided by the employer
- Occupational safety and health laws promoting worker participation.
- ACC - Compensation for injury at work (1972)
- The right for workers to form a union that elects its own independent representatives
- The right to be given notice and be consulted about changes at work -eg new technology, redundancies, and new working arrangements.
- Legislation ensuring a minimum code for all workers.

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# Unions – It Pays to Organise

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