

CUPE 5791 Scholarship Essay

While supporting another union's plight may not fall under the category of 'incumbent' responsibilities, I believe it falls under the spirit of the union itself. The ethos of unionizing is that we are stronger as a whole rather than as an individual. This rule then extends to the family of unions, which is stronger as a whole rather than as individual parts.

One strategy to support a neighbour union could involve cross-industry campaigns. A cross-industry campaign would enable unions to collaborate on addressing shared concerns like equitable wages, ensuring safe and healthy workplaces, and enhancing benefits. As an example, my father is a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. He is employed in the film industry, which involves the collaboration of employees from several unions. The nature of this industry means that some of the unions have greater visibility than others, such as the actor's union. If the teamsters decide to enact job action to fight for better working conditions, it would seem to be a moral obligation for the actor's union to advocate for and offer their support to their colleagues in the teamsters. The actor's union should want to ensure that their colleagues, the teamsters, had the type of working conditions that would align with their own views of a safe and healthy environment.

Another strategy that would offer inter-union support would encompass political advocacy. Political advocacy might entail collaborative efforts to foster favourable labour policies and workers' rights. A recent example involves the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation job action. While not actually able to participate in job action, three post-secondary faculty associations voiced their support for the STF and their ongoing job action. University of Regina Faculty Association (URFA), University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA) and Saskatchewan Polytechnic Faculty Associates (SPFA). The media reports made it well-known that these other supporting unions were behind the STF in their demands of government as they recognized the importance of the STF's ongoing concerns and their implications at the postsecondary education level which further added merit to the STF's position.

Finally, the formation of coalitions, whereby unions that share similar goals and values form alliances in another powerful strategy that can be used when unions support each other. Again, one can refer to the ongoing STF job action to illustrate this point. While the current STF job action surpasses nine weeks, a common disruption has been the removal of noon hour supervision. This job action has been supported across the province by unionized SUPE educational assistants/paraprofessional and non-unionized educational assistant alike. Both groups could easily choose to perform the noon hour supervision in place of the teachers and earn an extra hour of wages at the same time. However, the union has asked the educational assistant to act in solidarity with the STF by not taking on those additional tasks making the STF's job action more effective.

Unions supporting unions have a greater impact than unions acting in isolation. The above strategies and examples illustrate how this can be effective. It would stand to reason that support would be reciprocated should there be the occasion to do so.