

Types of Trade Union

Trade unions fight for workers' rights. As powerful agents of workers, they seek to extract all kinds of incentives, benefits for workers. Through joint action, they provide solid protection to workers and see that the domination of the employer over the industrial arena is contained.

Apart from wages and terms of employment, modern unions also take up issues concerning production norms, introduction of new products, technological changes and the like.

In a liberalized environment, the union is looked upon as a facilitator of change. A trade union is there to represent and protect the interests of its members. It is there to protect the economic, political and social interests of its members. The principal aim is to negotiate with employer over pay, job security, working hours, etc. putting the collective power of its members to best advantage.

The various types of trade union are:-

1. Craft Union
2. Industrial Union
3. General Union
4. Labour Unions
5. Blue-Collar Workers' Unions
6. White-Collar Workers' Unions
7. Reformist Unions
8. Friendly or Uplift Unions
9. Revolutionary Unions
10. Primary Unions
11. Staff Unions
12. Federation and Confederation
13. National Centres

Generally there are three types of trade unions:

1. Craft Union

The workers belonging to the same craft, specialized skill or same occupation can form their trade union irrespective of industry or trade they be employed. For example, mechanics working in different industries may form a union of mechanics only. In the same way electricians, carpenters, and turners may form their separate unions.

Therefore, craft unions are open to members of a certain trade/skill, like Air India Navigator's unions, Indian Pilots Guild, Ahmedabad Weaver's Union and the Kanpur Suti Mill Mazdoor Sabha. The main drawback of this union is that during strike in craft union, the entire working of the organization gets paralyzed because the workers of this union cannot be easily replaced by other workers. Their unions generally oppose technologically advances in the organization.

2. Industrial Union

The workers on the basis of industry can form unions irrespective of their craft. For example, if entire workforce of a cement industry decides to form a union consisting of workers of different craft; the union is called an industrial union. Therefore, an industrial union is open to the members of workers of a factory like Girni Kamgar Union at Bombay, Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad.

This type of union encourages workers solidarity and makes negotiations easy because a single agreement covers all workers of a particular industry. One major drawback of this type of union is that the skilled workers in it feel that their specific demands are not scientifically taken care of.

3. General Union

This type is open to all members irrespective of their craft and industry within a particular city or region. For example, Jamshedpur Labour Union, the National Union of Municipal and General Workers, whose membership includes workers engaged in different industries and crafts of Jamshedpur. In this case, there is no distinction between skilled and unskilled workers.