**Appendix 1: Teaching Strategies Lesson: For Women, By Women**

**Overview**

This lesson is intended to be taught in a Social Studies 11 unit, as part of the chapter on the 1970s decade and rise of the feminist movement; or Social Justice 12 (women and trade union issues).

**Introduction**

The teacher can begin the class with a brief introduction of the topic of trade unions; their growth over the twentieth century in Canada primarily among male workers, with a male leadership—until the 1970s, when feminists—and other marginalised workers--began challenging their exclusion from many institutions, including unions.

**The Lesson-Part One**

Distribute a copy of Appendix 2 “Labour Facts about Women in the Workforce” in the 1970s.” As students look over the statistics discuss: Why were most women in low-paid, ‘pink collar ghettos’? Why were most working women not in unions?

As more women entered the workforce in the 1970s, changes began to happen*.* Then play the video vignette “For Women, By Women.”

After the video the teacher should explain that when bank workers in BC conducted a union organizing drive through the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union (SORWUC) there were many challenges, and eventually the union had to give up the 24 unionised bank branches without gaining a union contract.

Initiate a discussion with the class.

*Possible questions and prompts:*

* + *Why do you think the bank drive failed?*
  + *Why do you think trade unions have not organized women workers in the past?*
  + *Are there low-paid workers in ‘ghettoised’ jobs in Canada today who would benefit by being in unions?*
  + *What are the risks—and benefits of union membership?*

**The Lesson- Part two: Union Organization Simulation**

The teacher explains that the class is going to conduct a simulation of a union organizing drive in a typical workplace where the workers make low-pay, have little say over their working conditions and few benefits.

The teacher will play the role of the workplace manager, trying to keep the union out. The students are the workers. The students will form groups of four and one person in the group will be designated the union organizer. The goal of the union organizer is to convince the other three students, within a time limit, to join the union by signing a union card. The union card is provided on the last page of Lesson Activity 2 in duplicate; photocopy enough of the cards to distribute to each of the students in your class.

*Teaching suggestion: It may be advantageous for the students selected to be the union organizers to have the package of leaflets to read in advance so they that can make better use of the resources to persuade the other students to join the union.*

The teacher can explain in advance of the activity, the consequences if a majority sign up “in real life”: The organizers are able to apply to the Labour Relations Board for a union certification. Once legally certified, workers can form a negotiating committee and bargain with their boss for a union contract. This means they can bargain for higher wages, better benefits and other workplace issues. Remember—as the video shows – employers, such as the banks, don’t always co-operate and this whole process can be very challenging for workers.

Enclosed in this lesson plan package are ‘Union Organizer Kits’ (Lesson Activity 2) containing actual information leaflets used during the SORWUC bank drive and union cards. After students break into groups of four, distribute one kit per group, to the designated union organizer. All students (including the organizer) receive a worksheet (Lesson Activity 1) to record their thoughts on the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of a union in the workplace.

The teacher (who is the anti-union “manager”) can make a short speech about how unions are not a good idea: higher wages mean higher prices for the consumer, workers have to pay union dues, workers could go on strike, workers have to do what the union tells them and unions are out of date. (2-3 minutes)

Within each group, the organizer can hand out the leaflets for the group members to read. (10-15 minutes)

Next, the organizer can begin to try to convince others to join a union. While discussing, each student will make notes on the worksheet chart. (15-20 minutes)

**Closure and lesson summary:**

The teacher ends the discussion after a two-minute warning. One organizer goes around the room and collects union cards of those students who have agreed to join. The organizer counts the cards and either declares the union drive to have succeeded (50% plus 1)—or failed.

Class discussion on the activity: Why did the union drive succeed? ...or fail? Encourage students to continue making notes on their chart (arguments “for” and against” unions) as this is discussed as a class.

What are some of the risks of organizing a union? What are some of the benefits? Are there long-term benefits when workers try to organize, even if they fail—as happened to BC bank workers in the 1970s?

**Assessment suggestions:**

1. Students can write two paragraphs on why they would—or would not—join a union—and why. Students should include in the assignment information from the simulation exercise. Students can also attach the worksheet notes (with at least five points on either side of the ledger) to the assignment.

and/or

1. Homework assignment – Using the internet, research a union organizing drive in Canada or another country within the last two years. Make notes about the union drive’s success or failure and impact.

In the next class, in groups of four, be prepared to share your findings. You will submit a brief summary of your findings and those of your three classmates in paragraph format for assessment.