

Unionized workplaces - key terms & concepts

These common terms/concepts appear in Last Exit to Springfield (Simpsons Season 4, Ep. 17) and are essential to understanding the collective bargaining process. Review these terms before watching the episode (recommended) and before starting the simulation.

- ❑ **UNION:** Organization of employees who have banded together to negotiate for better wages, benefits, working conditions, etc... and otherwise advocate on behalf of its members. (*Where unions exist in a workforce, most employees are required to join, pay dues and otherwise follow the union's rules.)
- ❑ **MANAGEMENT:** The employer/'da boss.
- ❑ **CONTRACT:** The legal document that describes all aspects of employment including wages, benefits and rights/responsibilities of workers and the employer. Most contracts last 2-4 years.
- ❑ **NEGOTIATORS:** The individuals hired by the union and management to negotiate a contract. Each side will have its own demands.
- ❑ **COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT:** A contract that is negotiated between the negotiators of the union and management. All collective agreements have to be "ratified" by the workers and the employer before becoming official.
- ❑ **STRIKE:** When a contract has expired, workers can vote on a strike date. If a new contract is not negotiated by that time, they may go on strike and refuse to do a parts of their job, or walk off the job altogether. (Workers are not paid when they walk off the job.)
- ❑ **WILDCAT STRIKE:** Any strike action that occurs before a contract has expired or without an established strike date.
- ❑ **PICKETING:** Workers who go on strike sometimes march outside the workplace, chanting and waving signs. Picketing workers may hand out leaflets explaining their perspective. Sometimes they attempt to delay or prevent people from accessing the workplace. Rarely, picketing turns violent.
- ❑ **SCABS:** A derogatory term for someone who crosses a picket line to do the job of someone who is on strike.
- ❑ **STRIKE BREAKERS** – Thugs hired by management to beat up and intimidate strikers and their leaders. (Illegal, so not common in Canada anymore.)
- ❑ **LOCKOUT:** A "reverse" strike. If a new contract is not negotiated by that time, the employer may shut down the operations, effectively putting the employees out of work. A rare tactic.
- ❑ **ORGANIZED CRIME** – Unions, especially in the early days, sometimes had ties to organized crime.