American Federation Of Teachers

Posted on October 7, 2019

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/american-federation-of-teachers/

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is an American-based labour union that represents teachers in the country. It was formed in 1916 in Chicago by its founder, Margaret Haley. The growth of the union was slightly slow during the first few years as some members were still reluctant to move from the current union. The AFT currently reports approximately 1.875 million members in more than 3,000 local affiliates. Its membership spans five principal divisions—pre-K–12 teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, higher-education faculty and staff, public employees, and healthcare professionals—and also includes early-childhood educators and retirees. The founders of the organization had common ground, and they all believed that the then union (National Education Association) did not represent their needs and sentiments well, and they, therefore, needed a stronger union that could air their views, which included:

- Better salaries
- Better working and living conditions
- Protection of basic rights that were outrightly violated.

Generally, most teachers join the union immediately after getting their teaching jobs. The organization, however, does not allow educators to join the union without directly applying for it (Chavez, 2004). After joining through your local teachers' union, you automatically become a member of the union and can start enjoying the benefits that come with it. At the top of the union are the members of the union; below them is the local union, below that is the state organization, and finally, there is the larger organization, which is the AFT.

Over the many years of its existence, the union has been involved in many legal disputes, just like every other organization. Some of these disputes include:

American Federation of Teachers vs Robert GREEN Plaintiff-Appellant

This was a result of the firing of Robert Green by the Aurora East School District in 2010 from his position as a teacher. He requested his union to pursue the grievance under a collective bargaining agreement, but the union refused. He also requested the union to represent him in a lawsuit against the school, but the union refused to do so. He filed the suit himself, won it, and was later reinstated. Mr. Green, a black American, felt betrayed by his union, which he had been a member of for a long

time, and argued that it was only right for them to look into the matters that led to his firing.

The union argued that it was not in its agreement to protect its members, although it was justifiable for the union to refuse his requests as the district court of Illinois law did not require teachers' unions to represent teachers by filing any grievances under the Tenure Act. There were no strikes involved in solving the case, but the court had fair hearings of all the events that led to the firing of Mr. Green. The judge who presided over the case was very confident that Mr. Green would not win against the union if the union had blatantly discriminated against and handed its victim an engraved admission. Finally, Mr. Green won the case, surprisingly, and he also got his job back.

American Federation of Teachers Vs AFTexposed.com

The case was filed in court on 10/08/2009 in Michigan. The legal claims of the dispute were Cybersquatting and Trademark Infringement. The parties involved were the American Federation of Teachers and AFTexposed.com. (Kyle Olson; Education Action Group Foundation). AFTexposed.com was a website that published political commentary about the AFT. They exposed the agendas, finances, and tactics that the American Federation of Teachers was involved in. AFT, therefore, sued them for using their acronym and demanded the immediate cessation of the use of the domain AFTexposed.com or any other variant that includes the acronym AFT.

The case in court went on for some time and was later withdrawn. The case was later solved through arbitration, where AFT contacted AFTexposed.com, informing them that they were deeply committed to free speech and would never again attempt to stifle their freedom of speech. The secretary general of the organization also made it clear that the only concern was that the website's logo was very close to that of their organization, hence creating concerns about the website's intentions towards the organization. AFTexposed.com claimed that they had their own logo and did not use the AFT's logo at any particular time, so it was made clear that the American Federation of Teachers does not like AFTexposed.com. Although the case ended, there still remained some bad blood between the two, but no other cases have been reported ever since.

Chicago Teachers Union Strike

In April 2016, the Chicago teachers' union threatened to go on strike. They protested for an increase in wages as well as the provision of fast food. The president of AFT joined the teachers in their strike, which was held in the streets of city hall, Cook County, and Chicago State University. However, some organizations, such as CPU, claimed that the strike was not legally allowed, and they argued that the U.S. Supreme Court decision that dealt with private-sector workers and told the Chicago Tribune that timing requirements do not necessarily apply if the employer is responsible for the unfair labour practices.

Many churches and other private and public sectors stepped in to help solve the causes of the strike. However, the CTU had close relationships with many influential activists and community leaders who actively involved themselves in the issues encountered by the teachers of Chicago. The strike was also viewed as politically generated as the union was divided into two opposing groups, which made it hard to resolve the conflict. One group thought the mayor of Chicago caused the many problems they faced and believed it would only benefit a few people, according to Basca (1994).

The dispute was solved with help from other organizations that intervened and helped resolve it. The teachers' grievances were addressed accordingly, and the strike was called off. Though not all of the things they had been fighting for were met, the most important of them were met. These included raising their wages and improving working conditions for all teachers in both the public and private sectors.

References

Bascia, N. (1994). *Unions in teachers' professional lives. New York: Teachers College Press*.

Chavez, L. (1997). *An era of crystal clear views. Chicago Tribune, p. 17.*

Schmidt, N. (1978). *The American Federation of Teachers and the CIA. Chicago:*

Substitutes United for Better Schools (SUBS).