Commonly Asked Questions
About Joining BCTGM

How does the BCTGM Union work?

The BCTGM stands for the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers. It is a democratic non-profit organization made up of workers in all of the above industries and other food industries. There are over 200 local unions that are affiliated with the BCTGM International Union in the United States and Canada. Each local union has its own autonomy and their own by-laws, union dues, and other functions of the local union and is united through the International Union. The International Union is affiliated with the AFL-CIO in USA, Canadian Labor Council in Canada and the IUF, which gives us strength worldwide. The Members are the Union and the Union are the Members!

Who runs the Union?

YOU run your own union. Members elect their own negotiating committee and prepare list of improvements that you want included in your contract. You elect your officers and shop stewards. The members make all major decisions of the local, and the members at any single shop vote on all improved wages, benefits, and working conditions at their prospective shop. The Union is NOT made up of "outsiders"—it is you, the workers, who make the BCTGM Union. There is safety and strength in numbers and this is why Union workers have POWER. Power to secure what they have and power to get what they need for the future.

How much are union dues?

BCTGM Local 57 union dues are $42.50 a month, which is less than a cup of coffee a day. There is no initiation fee for newly organized plants. No dues are required until after a majority of the members in a shop vote and ***approve a contract worth the dues***. Just like any organization, the Union must be funded financially. Dues go towards representation, education, public relations, organizing, research, and legal cost, just to name a few expenditures. Collectively, workers have POWER through UNITY as one voice, and COLLECTIVELY they can build a treasury up to financially assist them in any labor dispute and injustices with any company or corporation that may purchase the company.

Will the Union make us go on strike?

No one can force you to go on strike. According to the BCTGM International Constitution, there can only be a strike at your place if 75% (more than a majority) of members at your plant vote to strike; even then the International will do everything in its power to get a fair agreement without a strike. BCTGM settles over 99% of over 3000 contracts without a strike. A strike is a serious action that only happens when the company is not fair and forces workers to take such actions. Ultimately, it will be YOUR DECISION on how important certain issues are to you and your co-workers to be included in your contract and how far you will go to secure your needs. As a Union we make every effort to secure a contract without having to strike. Over the years the BCTGM has become very creative in getting great contracts settled without a work stoppage. However, without the right and power to take action against a greedy and unjust employer, workers would be forced to do whatever the company tells them to do regardless how unfair and unjust.

Will the company close if we vote to join the Union?

NO! It is against the law for the company to close or even to threaten to close the plant because workers join the union. Companies go out of business because people stop buying their products or consolidation or relocation, not because workers are treated fairly. Keep in mind the most profitable companies in the world, especially in our industry, have Union workers who enjoy fair contract(s) and they make a healthy profit for the Company. The main reason of forming a union is to make the company a better place for all to work. This is why you want and need a Union contract to secure your future. The fact is **more non-union plants close than union shops.** If a union plant is closing, the company must bargain over the effects of the closing. Non-union workers do not have this right.

Will I lose wages and/or benefits I have now for joining the BCTGM?

NO! It is against the law for a company to take away benefits or wages you have now in order to punish you for voting for Union representation. *If the company could take away wages or benefits because you join the union, thereby making them more of a profit, don't you think they would be encouraging you to join the BCTGM rather than trying to scare workers into not joining?*

It is the opposite. Without a Union contract, the Company can change or take away anything at any time. You presently work under the "**Employee at Will**" doctrine, meaning the Company can end your employment with or without cause. If you don't join the Union and secure your benefits, wages, and working conditions in a contract, the Company can legally change whatever they want, whenever they want! BCTGM members vote on all changes that effect their working conditions, benefits, and wages.

There has never been a bakery where workers joined the Union and didn't make great gains, including the right to arbitrate any injustices or violations of the workers' rights. Federal law states that both "the Union and the Company must bargain in good faith".

Can I be suspended or fired for attending Union activities or meetings?

It is a clear violation of the National Labor Relations Act (federal law) to discriminate, punish, suspend, harass, or fire any worker or workers who exercise their federally protected right to better their working conditions, especially when participating in Union activities.

THE BOTTOM LINE

BCTGM Representatives and BCTGM Members who make up this International Union can only HELP non-union workers to the point where they want to make their own livelihoods better. Only YOU and YOUR Co-Workers get to vote to become members. YOU are the only ones who can make proposals for your legally binding contract.

YOU are the UNION!

Sign a card and Vote YES!

For better conditions and better treatment for ALL!