



Lighting Fires vs Putting Them Out: *Stewards & Building Union Capacity*

Elaine Bernard, PhD

*Labor and Worklife Program & The Trade Union Program,
Harvard Law School©*

Ohio Civil Service Employees Association

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Elaine Bernard

- Executive Director, Labor & Worklife Program, and Harvard Trade Union Program, Harvard Law School
- Work with a variety of unions – in the US, Canada, and internationally - on developing skills & educational programs for union leadership
- Teach in fields of international comparative labor movements, unions & civil society, and leadership & organizational change

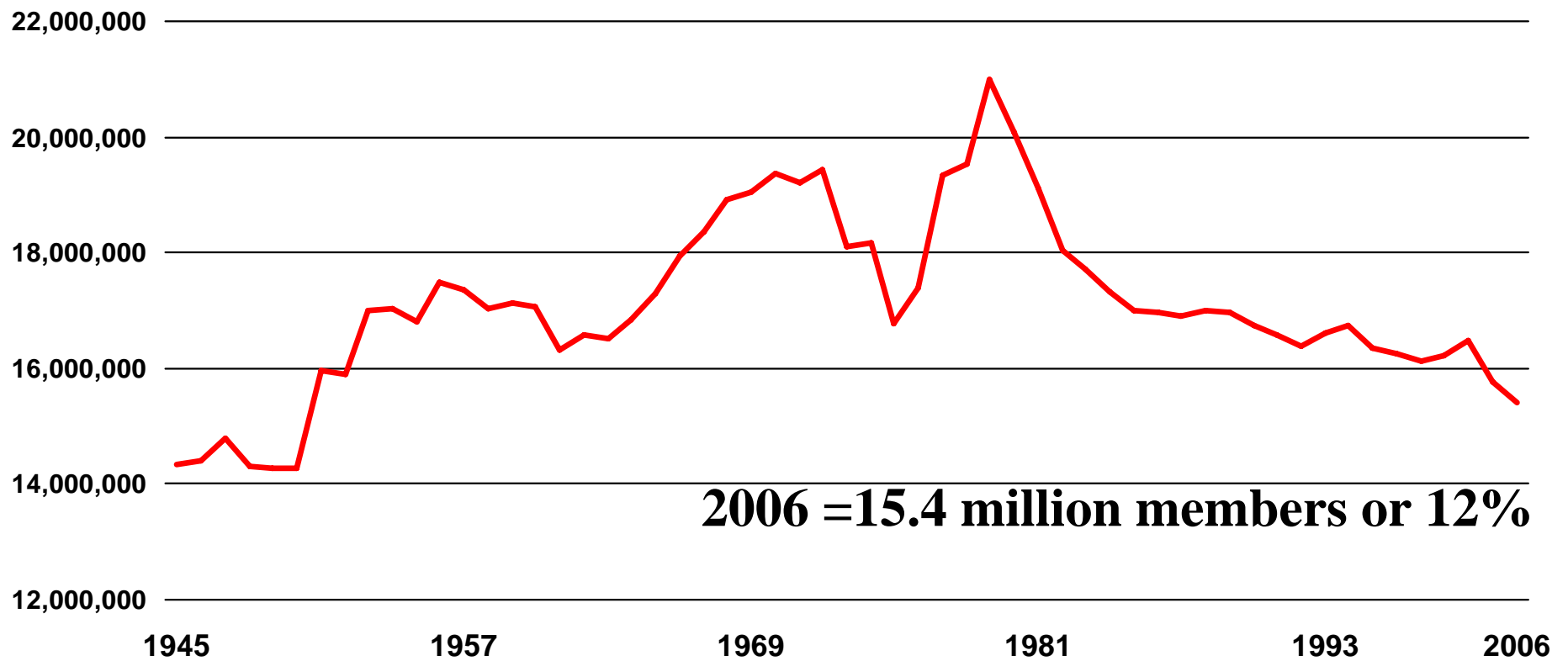
Outline

- The state of the labor movement
- Its significance for you
- Revisiting what unions do?
- Thoughts on the role of stewards and how unions can build capacity

The State of Organized Labor

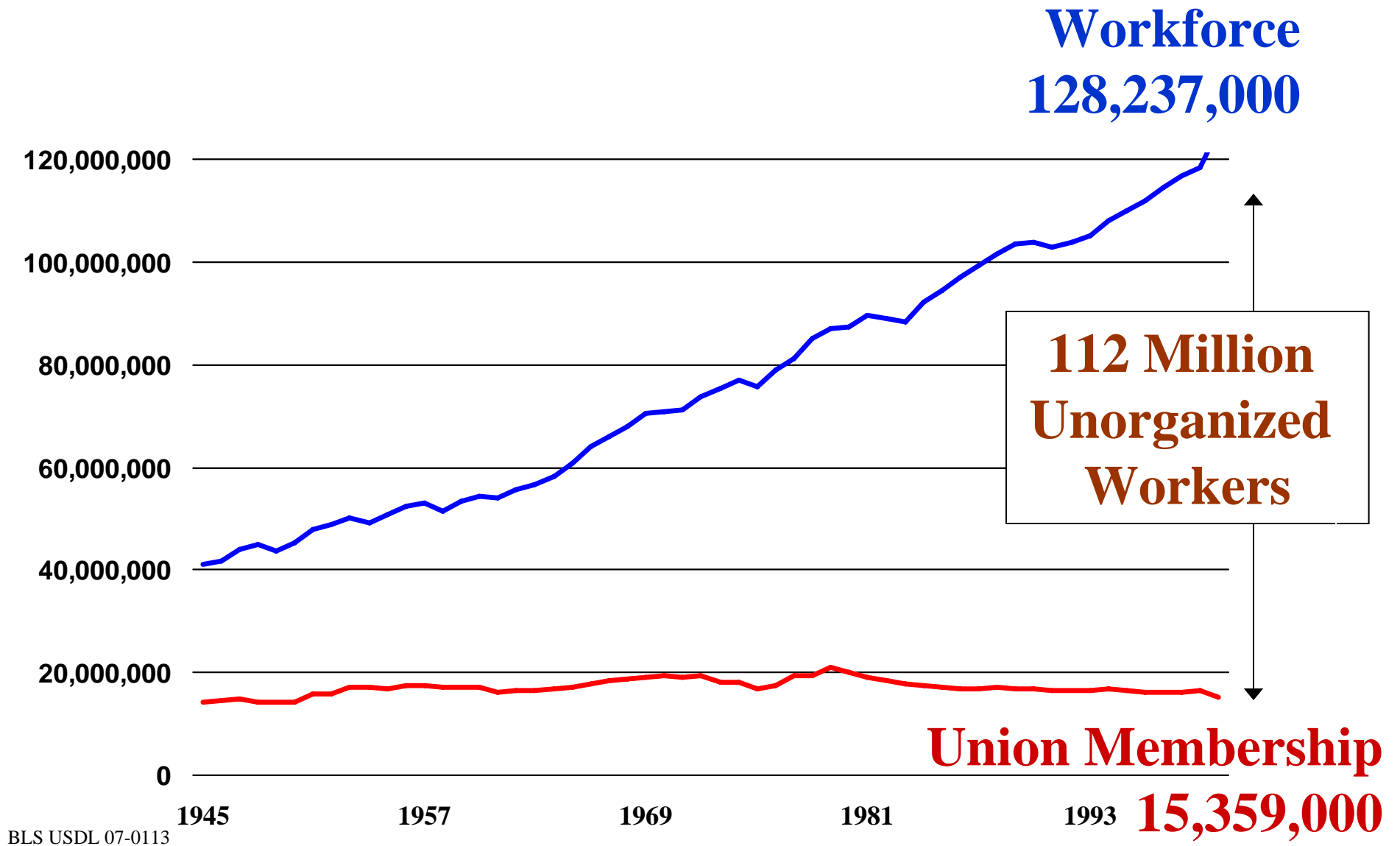


Union Membership, 1945-2006



Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor; BLS; Statistical Abstract.

Unions & the Workforce 1945- 2006



Ohio Union Data 2006

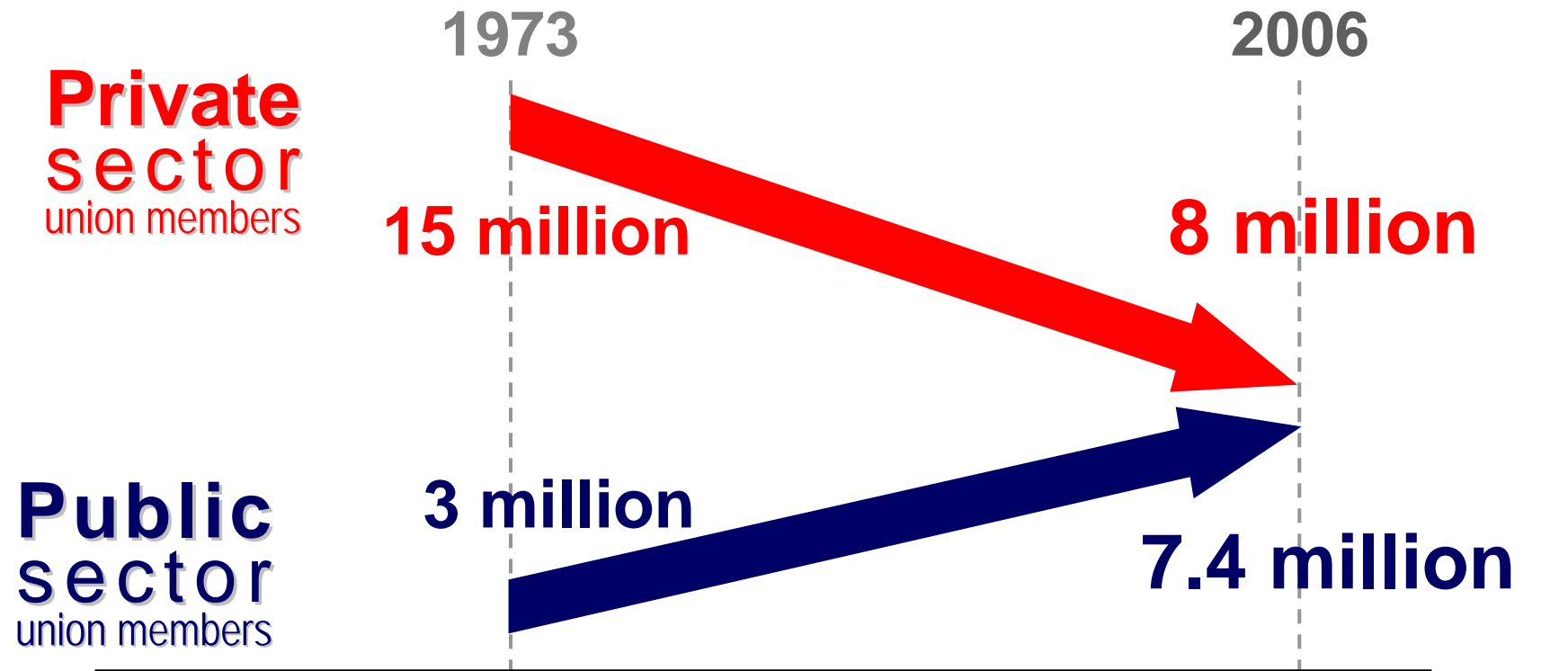
- **14.2%** workforce union members

Down from...

- **16.7%** in 2003
- **4 ¼ million** Ohio workers **non** union



Changes in Sector Union Density



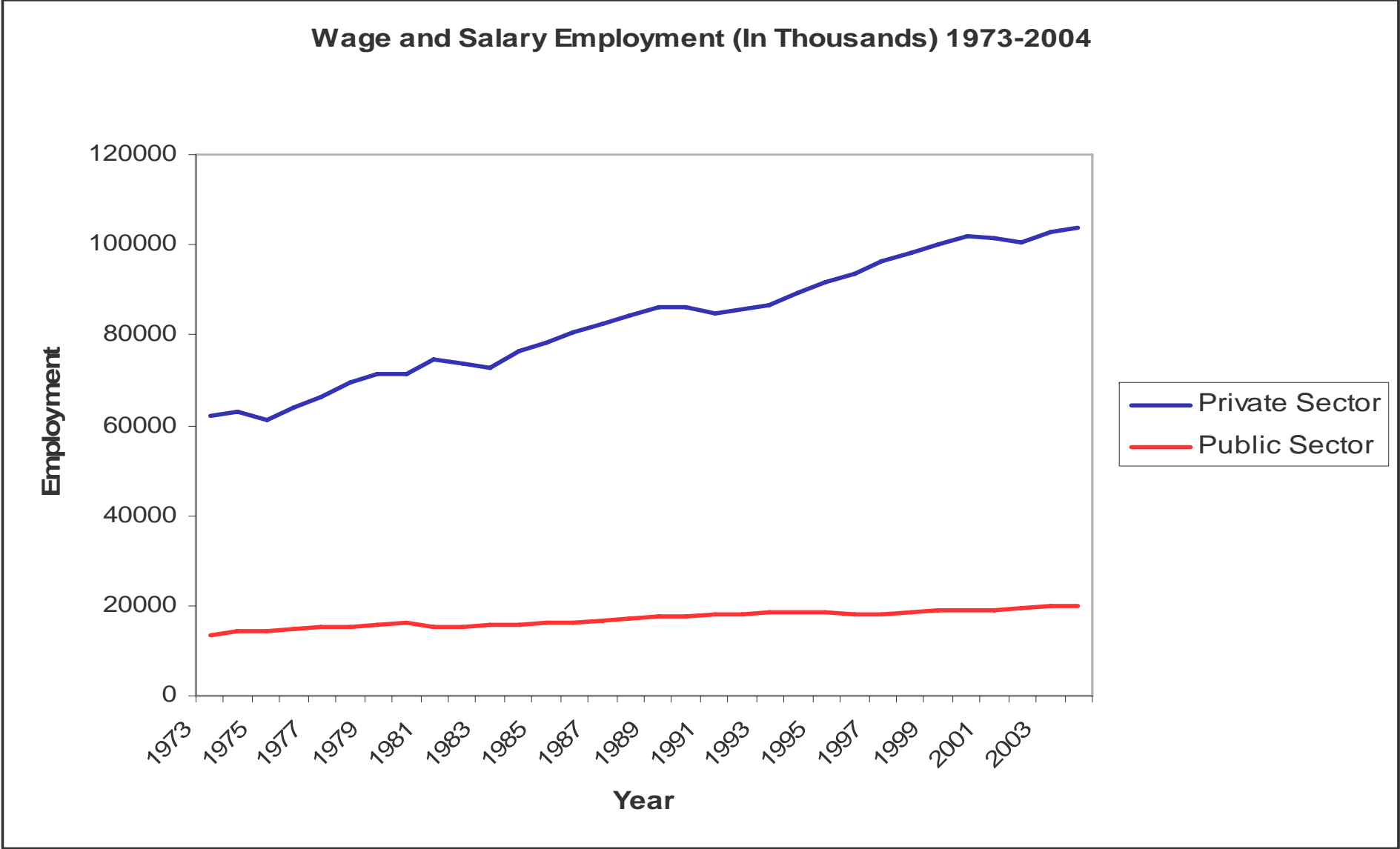
Private Sector Density 24%

Public Sector Density 23%

Private Sector Density 7.8%

Public Sector Density 36.5%

Employment Growth (Public & Private Sector)



* Data from 1973-1981 from the May Current Population Survey (CPS)

* Data from 1983-2004 from the CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files

* Data for 1982 was unavailable and estimated by this formula: $[\text{Employment}(1983) + \text{Employment}(1981)]/2$

Current Pace and Scale of Organizing

In **2003**, unions organized **500,000** workers.

To raise density by **1%**, unions must organize **1.5 million** workers.

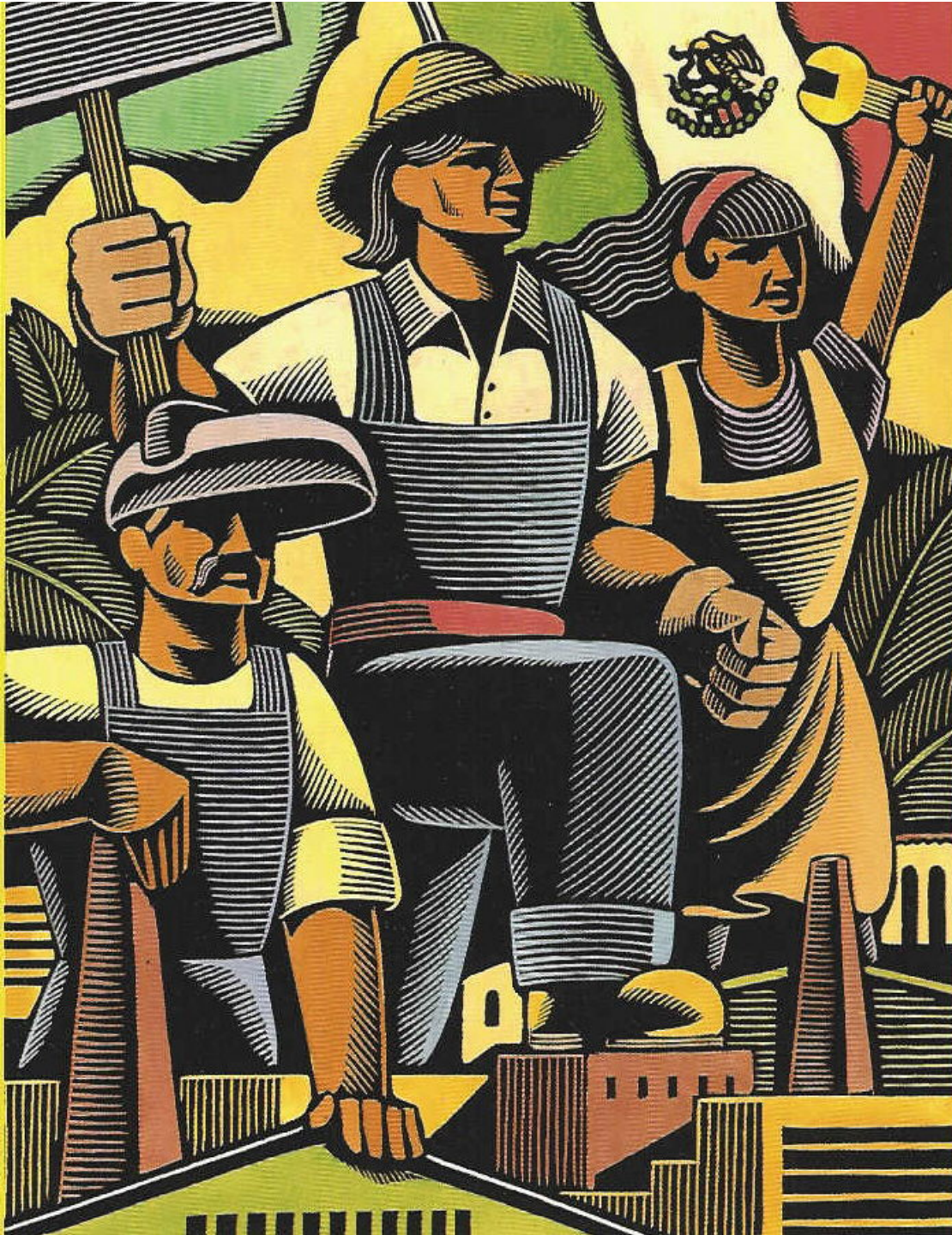
To match **1981** density of **22%**, unions must organize **10.7 million** workers.

To match **1947** density of **35%**, unions must organize **25.5 million** workers.



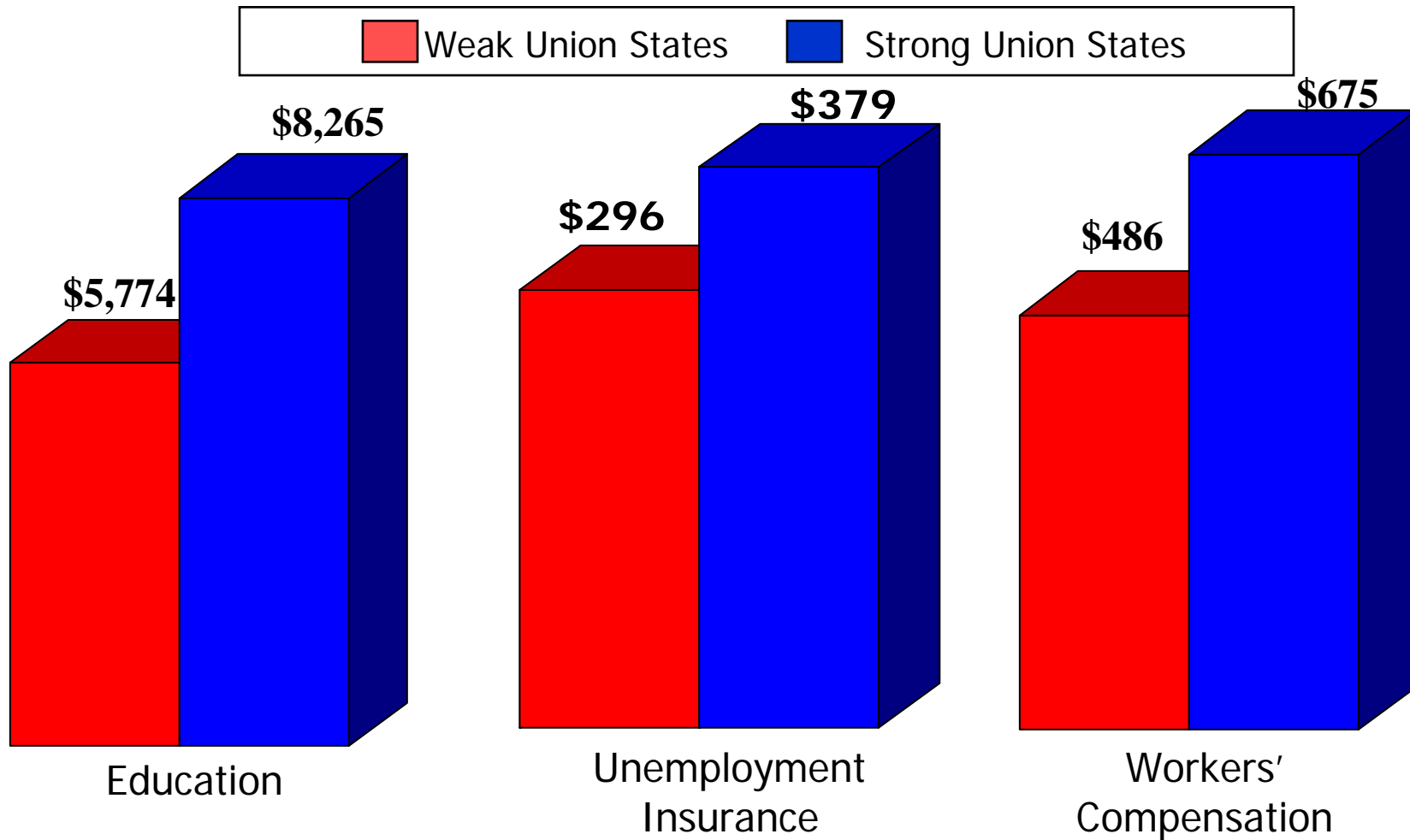
DESPAIR

IT'S ALWAYS DARKEST JUST BEFORE IT GOES PITCH BLACK.



**What Do
Unions Do?
Why the Overall
Decline in Unions
Matters to
Everyone**

Union Impact on Public Policy

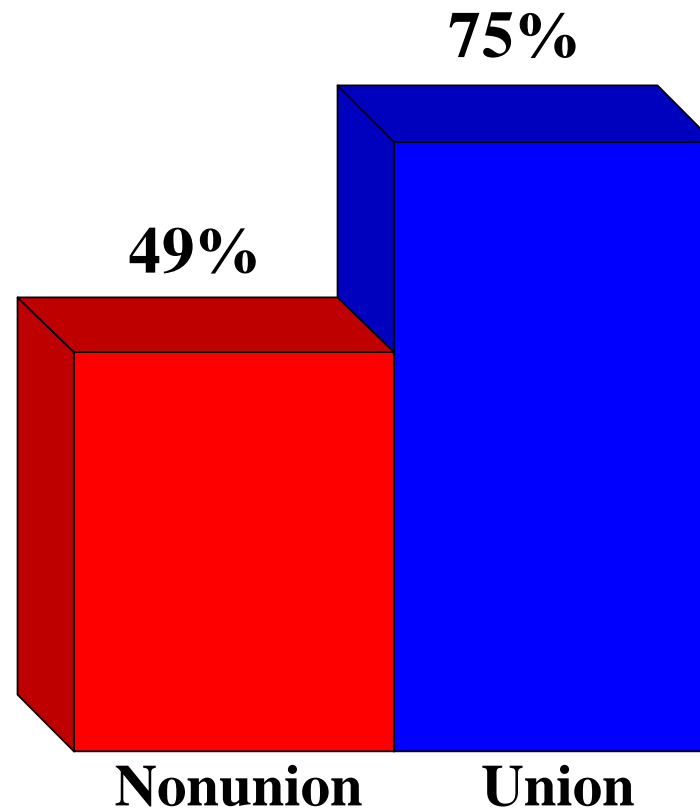


Source: U.S. Census, BNA, 2001

Unions & Health Insurance

75% of union workers
have health insurance

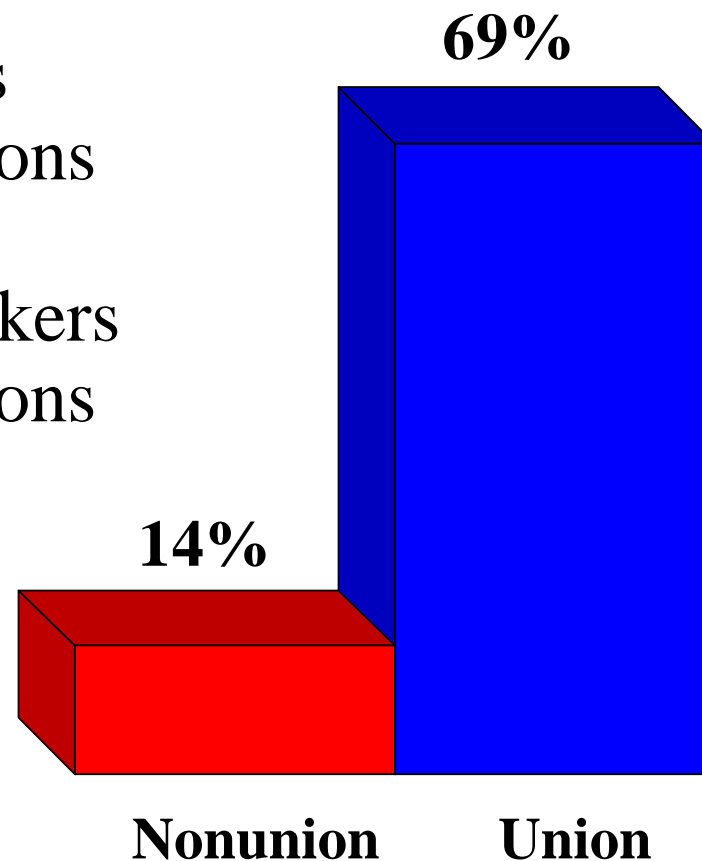
49% of nonunion
workers get health
insurance



Unions & Guaranteed Pensions

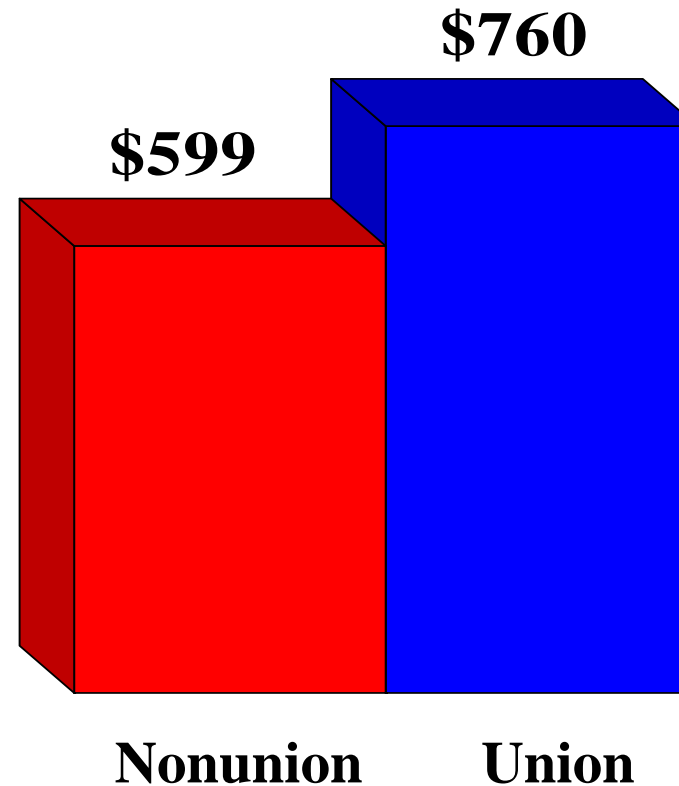
69% of union workers
have guaranteed pensions

14% of nonunion workers
have guaranteed pensions

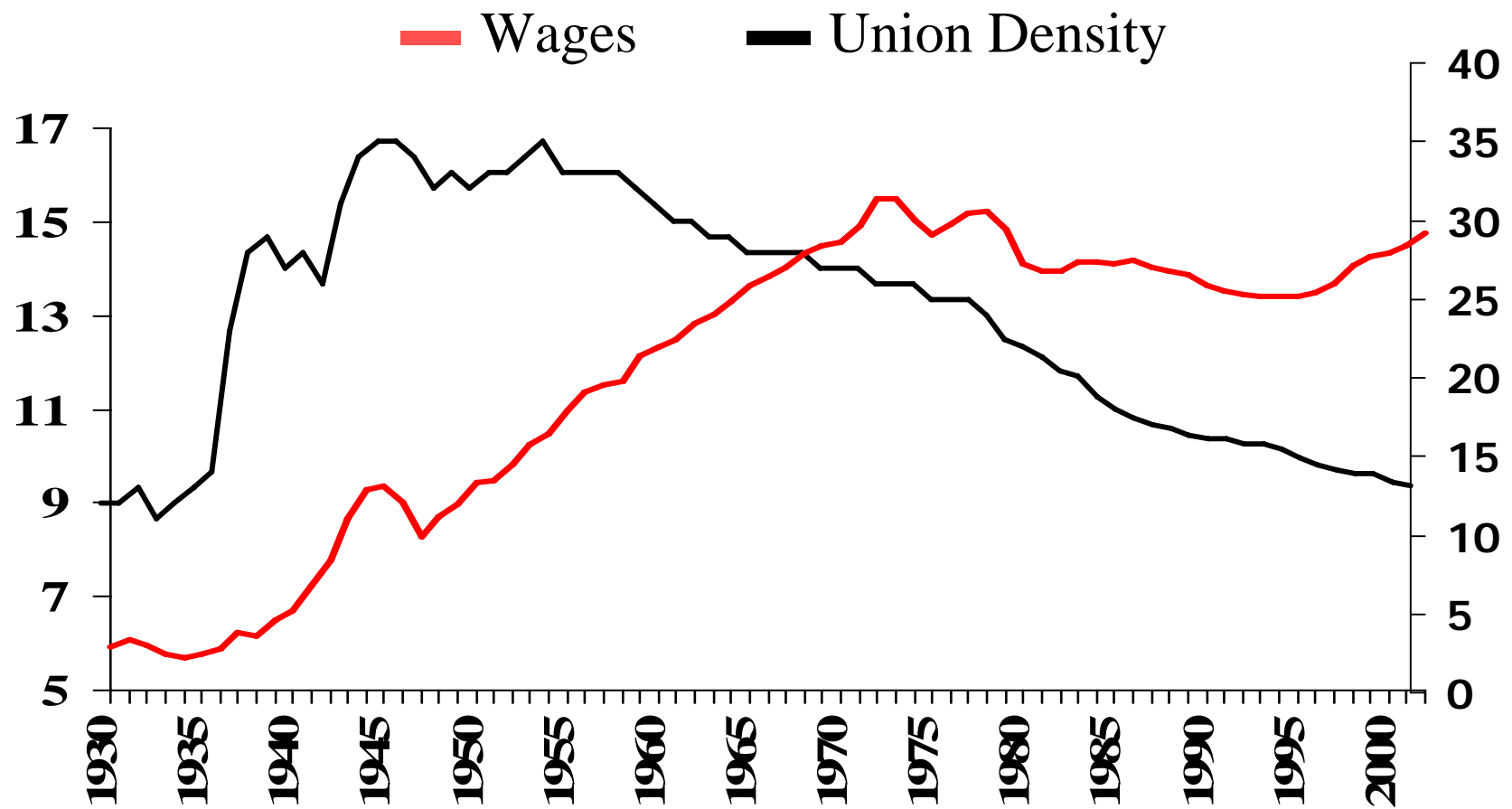


Union Wage Premium

Union workers earn
27% more than non
union workers.



Decline in Unions Contributes To Wage Stagnation



Source: *Employment & Earnings; U.S. DOL, BLS*

What Unions Do? Beyond Wages & Benefits

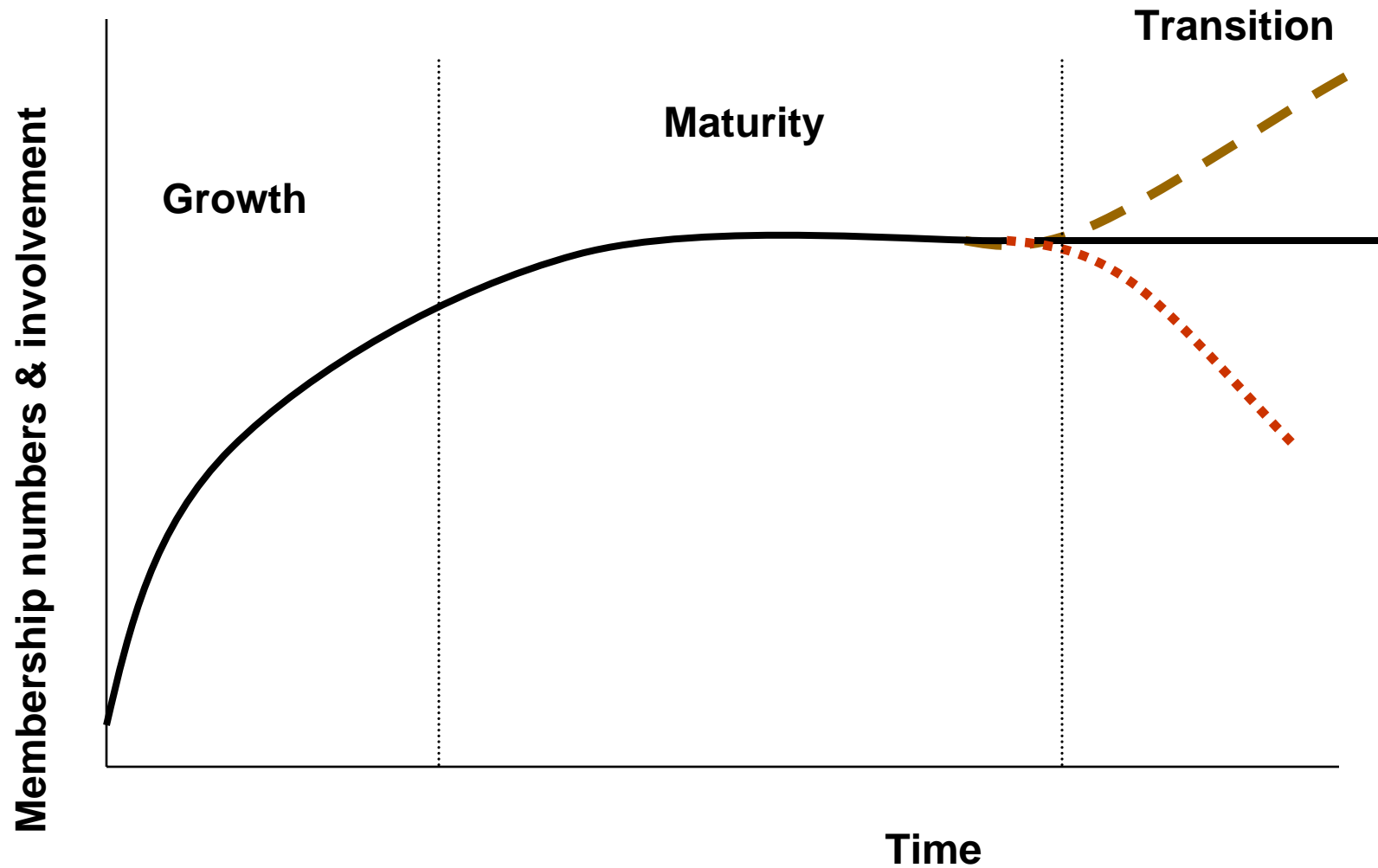


- Organization for **winning rights**
- Vehicle for **exercising rights**
- Schools for **democracy** – the right to participate in decisions that affect you
- Builders of a **community of interest** among members, and with the wider community
- Provides “**Voice**” vs “**exit**” - providing management with valuable “feed back” essential for systems improvement
- Premier institution of civil society, **promoting democracy** in the workplace, economic and social justice and equality



**Building
Local Union
Capacity:
Why It's So
Necessary &
Why It's So
Hard**

OCSEA: A Mature Organization at a Cross-Roads



OCSEA's Challenge...



- **New workforce** (different needs/expectations)
- Members have **little knowledge of unions, collective bargaining or labor history**
- Workforce & public - grew up in **anti-union environment**
- Workforce & public – grew up in **anti-government & public enterprise environment**

OCSEA's Challenge...

Members view the union as a “**service**” or workplace “**insurance**” (at best)



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OCSEA's Challenge...

Members (and Management) think the power of the union resides in the staff & headquarters



Importance of the Local Union

- Where members **join** the union
- Where members **experience** the union
- Where members become **involved** in the union
- Where members **shape** the character of the union

The **keystone** of the union – because it's the foundation for membership participation and **leadership development** (unions, political, community...)



STEWARDS are the key people who are the **union** to most members.

Role of the Steward

Wears many hats...

- Communicator
- Educator
- Grievance handler
- Problem solver
- Advocate
- Union workplace representative
- **LEADER**



Role of the Steward



Grievance Handler...

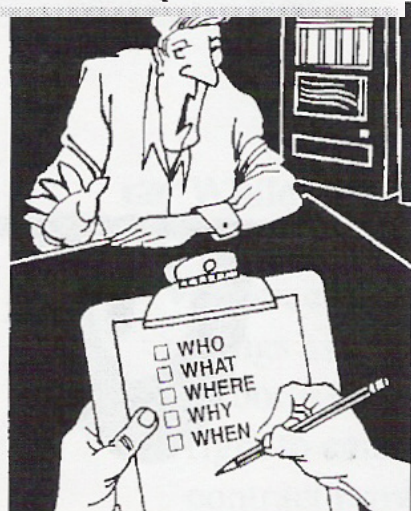
- **Educate** members on the contract and their rights (grievances as educational moment)
- Identify **grievances vs problems** (both need to be dealt with but process is different)
- Close attention to **detail & rules** of grievances process (failure to properly deal with grievances not only exposes union to expensive “duty of fair representation” suits)
- **Efficient & speedy** handling of grievances demonstrates the unions **power & competence** (to members and management)



Role of the Steward

So...

- **Knowing** your contract
- Conducting a thorough **investigation** of all grievance claims
- **Timely & thorough writing up and filing and following through** on grievances (including keeping the grievant informed on the progress of their grievance)
- All important competencies – but for **stewards as leaders** – need to be **organizers** too



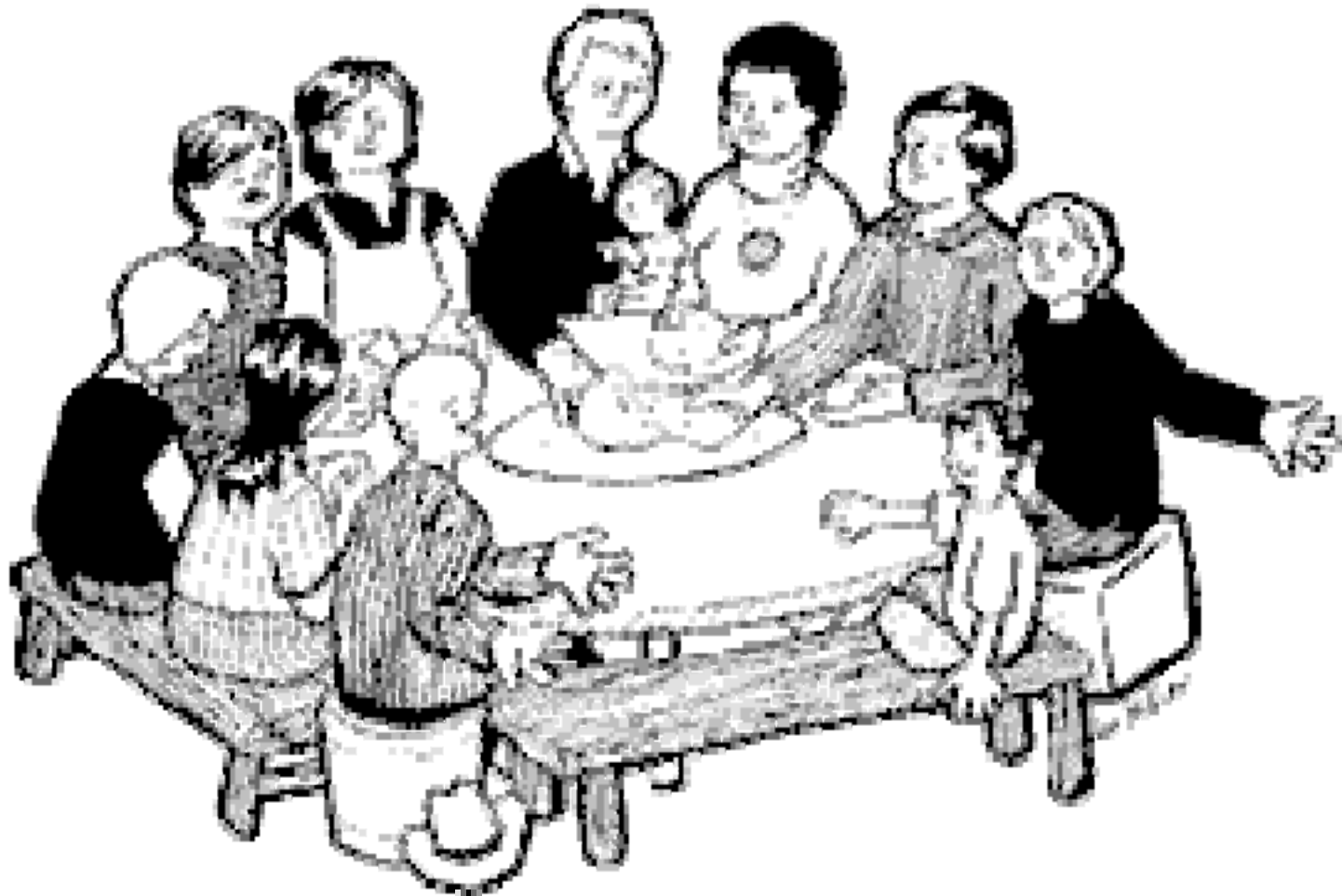
Organizers Light Fires



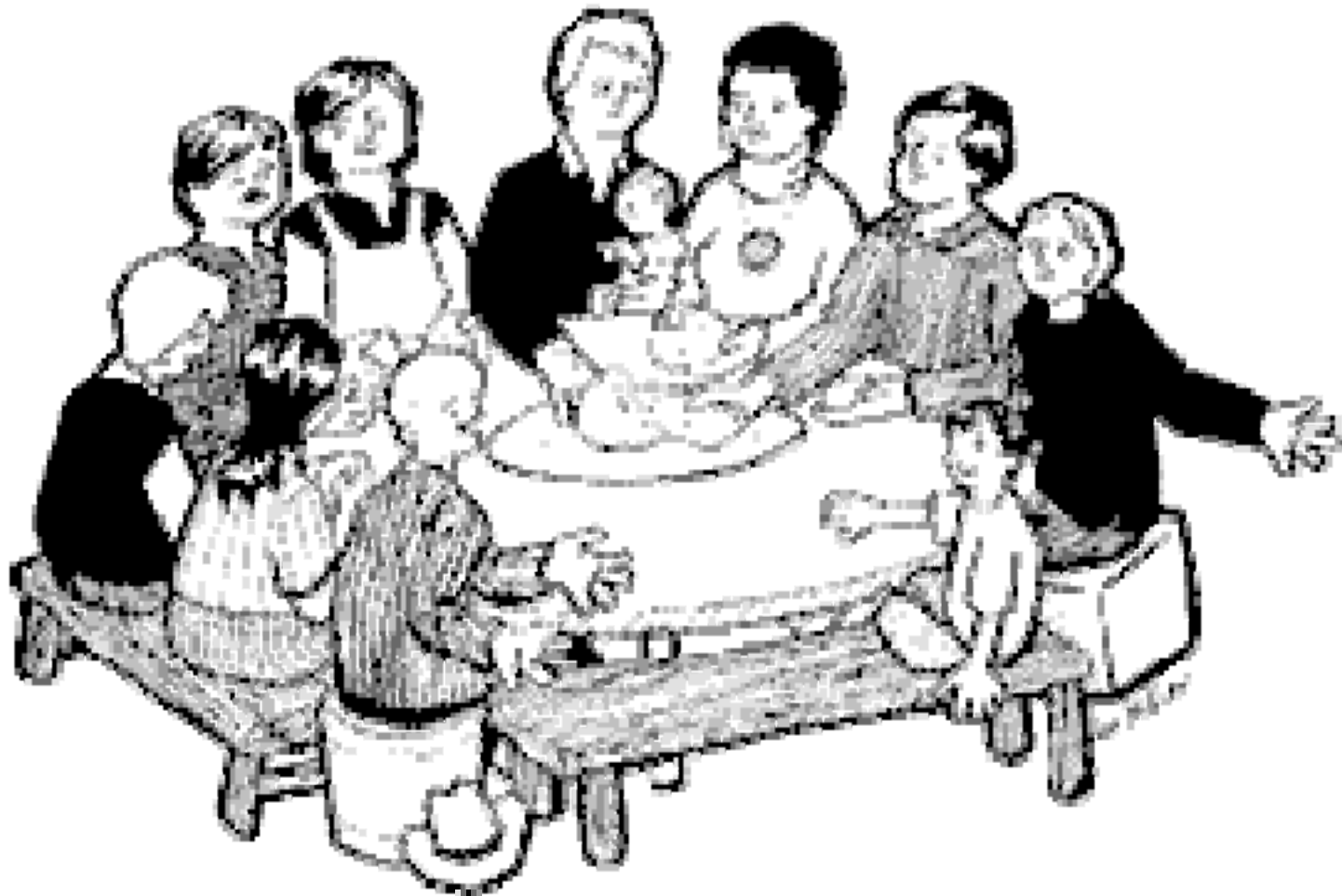
The **leadership skill** of getting workers involved in the union and moving them from “fair share” and **passive** “dues payers” to active participants and leaders is called

ORGANIZING

Organizing is Lighting Fires –
Building Relationships & Involving People
in Collective Action



**It begins with one-on-one discussions
with members & learning about their
concerns...**



DisOrganization

Leadership

Organization

Reactive

Strategize

Initiative

Passive

Motivate

Participation

Divided

Relationships

Unites

Confused

Interpret

Understands

Inactive

Mobilize

Action

OCSEA: A Union of Leaders



What Do Leaders Do?

Strategize – take initiative

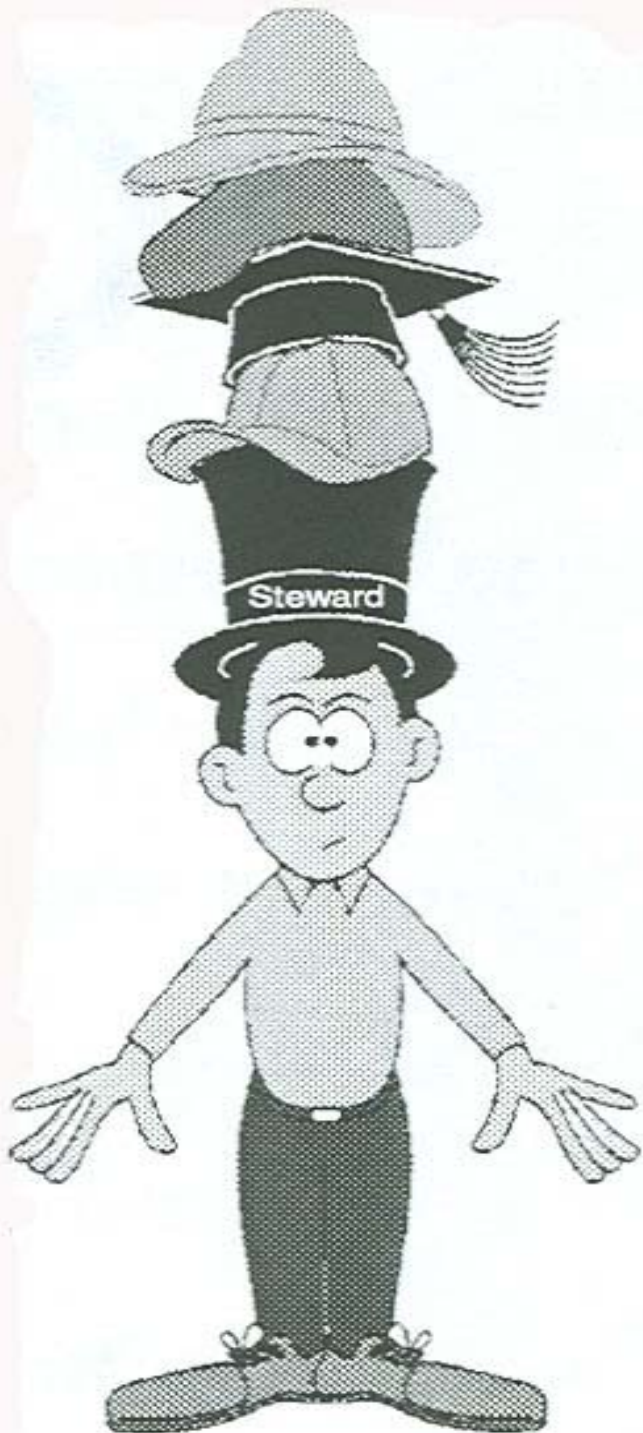
Motivate – others to participate

Build Relationships – move from division to unity & solidarity

Interpret – move from confusion to understanding

Mobilize – the widest possible support for actions

Mentor – and develop new leaders



**The meek may
inherit the
earth,
but
STEWARDS
will make sure
they can keep
it.”**