

“Rights at Work”

**Why Unions Matter,
To You AND Your Community**

*Unifor Leadership Meetings,
January/February 2014*

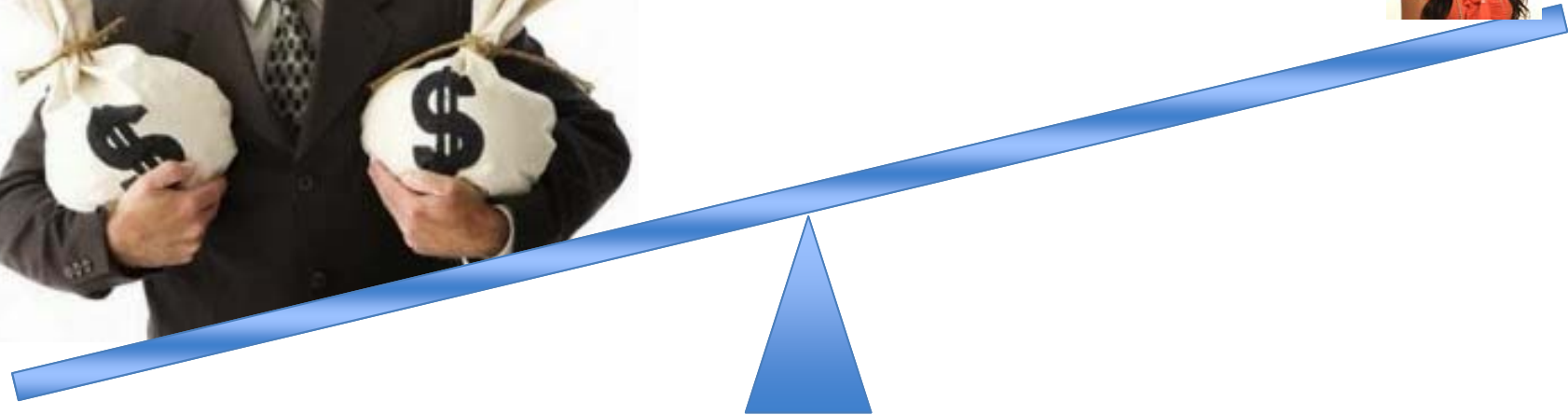


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What are Unions Good For, Anyway?



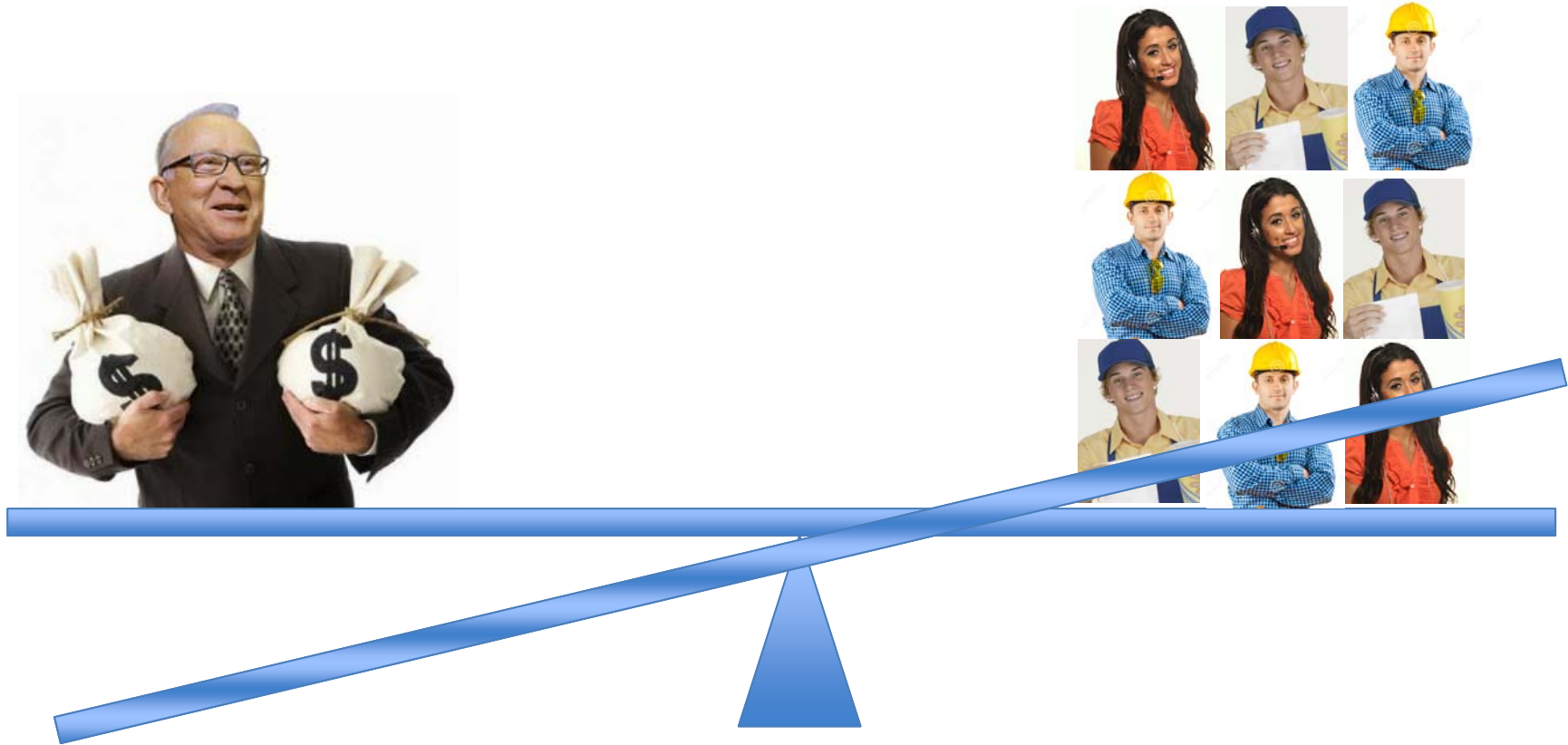
What are Unions Good For, Anyway?



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- There is an inherent imbalance of power between employers and individual workers.
- Each worker needs a job to support themselves and their family (“**work or starve**”).
- But the employer doesn’t need any **particular** worker.
 - Unless you are Wayne Gretzky or Steve Jobs!
 - Employer does need **all** workers to run the business.
- One-on-one, the worker has no power to reach a fair deal. Wages stay low, incomes are lopsided.
- By going to the boss collectively, workers can even the scales, reach a fair deal that shares the gains.

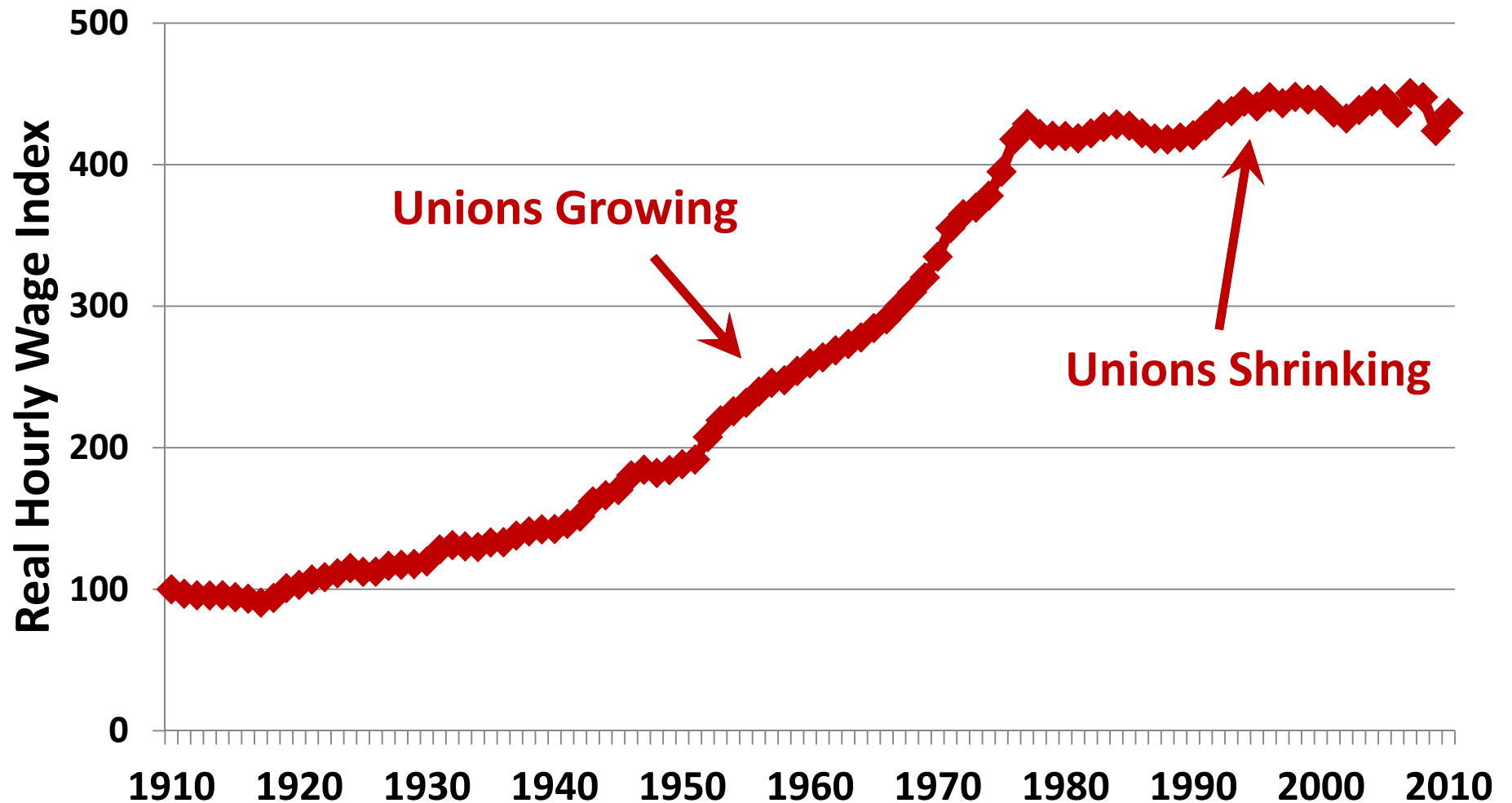
What are Unions Good For, Anyway?



Unions and YOU

- The advantages of union membership and collective bargaining for union members are clear:
- **Wages**: On average across the whole economy, union members earn \$5 more per hour (23%).
 - The positive effect is bigger for part-timers and women.
 - We work hard for those higher wages!
 - \$50 billion/yr extra purchasing power from “union advantage.”
 - Would be \$150 billion if everyone made a union wage.
- **Pensions**: Union members have 85% coverage (versus under 30% for non-union).
- **Other Union Advantages**: drug/health benefits, sick pay/LTD, health & safety, seniority rights, no unjust termination, a voice in the workplace, more.

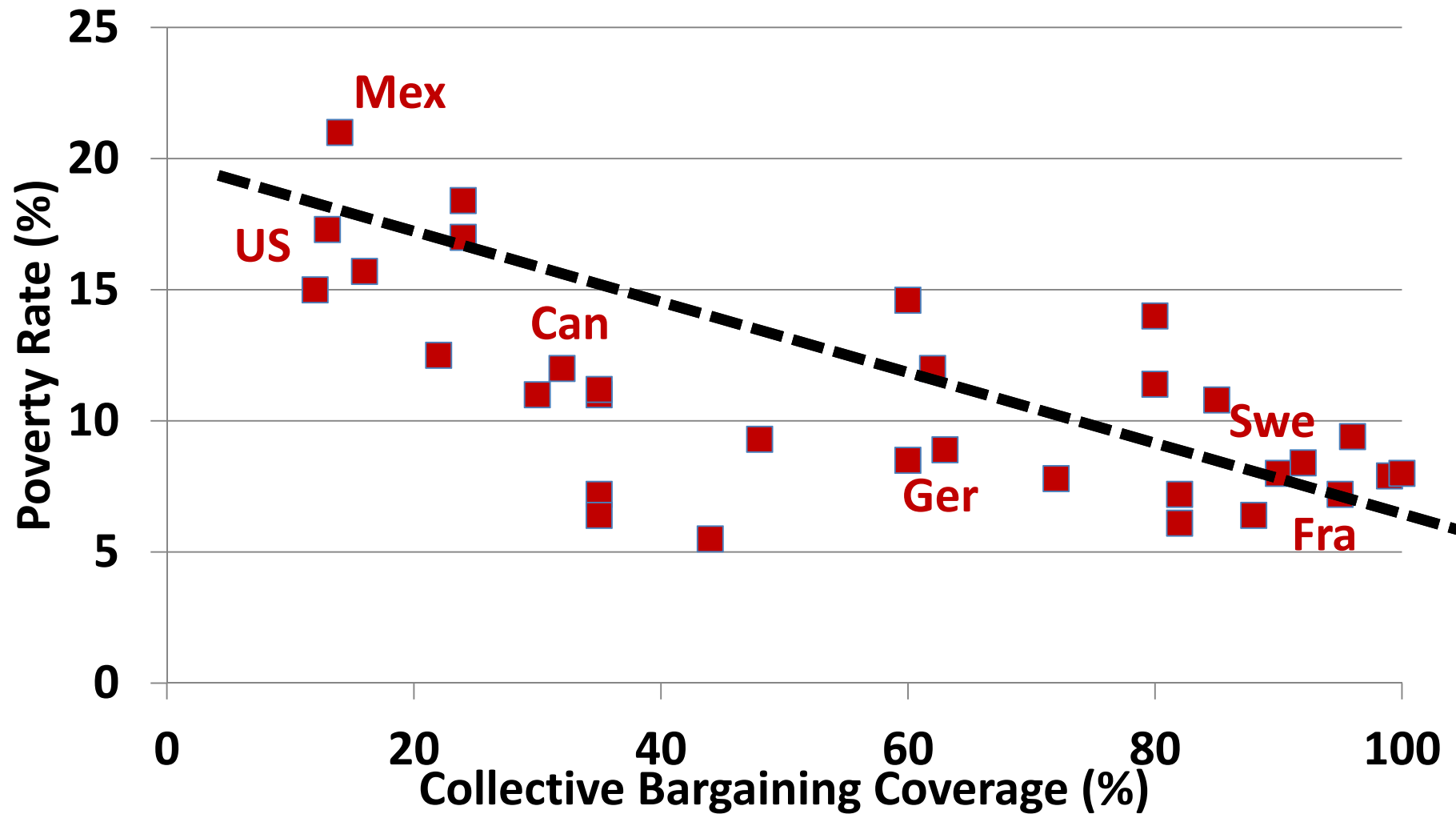
Unions and Wages



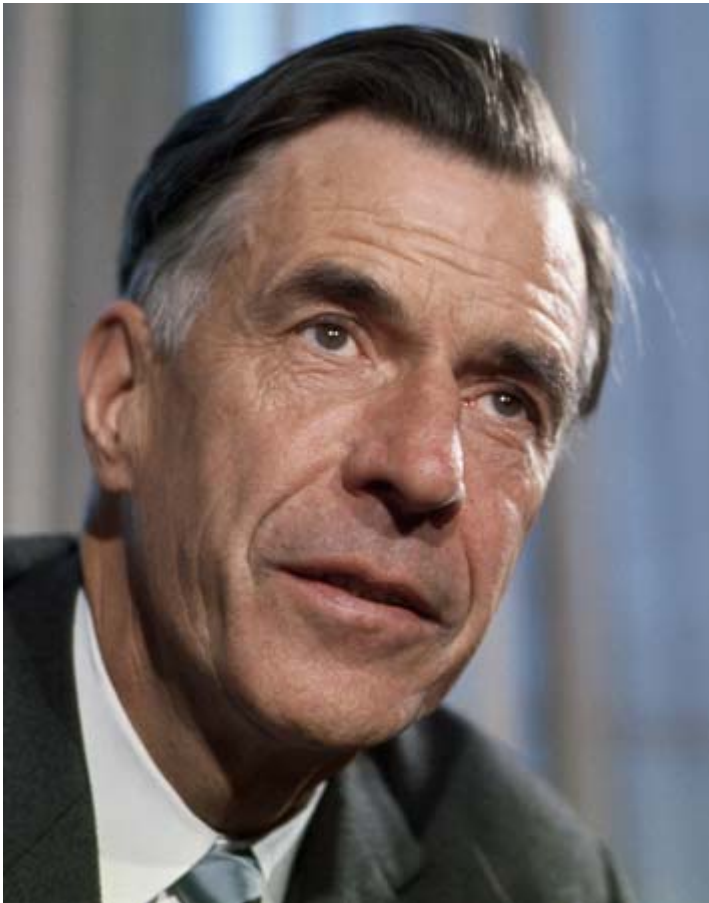
Unions and CANADA

- The broader benefits of collective bargaining for a healthier, more inclusive society are also clear:
- **Inequality**: Where unions are stronger, income is more equal – and communities are stronger.
- **Productivity**: Value-added per worker is higher in unionized jobs, this benefits exports and the whole economy.
- **Purchasing Power**: Union wages support spending & jobs.
- **Health**: Better incomes, benefits produce healthier families – with fiscal savings for government, too.
- **Democracy**: Unions promote participation and voting.
- **Happiness**: International surveys show unionized countries report better happiness! (Denmark 😊).

Unionization and Poverty



Theory of “Countervailing Power”



John Kenneth Galbraith

- Corporate influence will unbalance society.
- Need institutions to push in opposite direction.
- Unions are a crucial force.

...Imagine what Canada would look like today without unions???

Takeaway #1:

Workers are better off, and society is healthier, when unions and collective bargaining are strong.

Collective Bargaining Needs Support

- Predictably, most employers would prefer not to deal with workers collectively.
- Their resistance can defeat efforts to establish and maintain collective bargaining:
 - Firings.
 - Refusal to bargain.
 - Relocation / Outsourcing.
 - Violence.
- For stable collective bargaining to survive, supportive laws / policies / standards must be in place.
 - It must be a goal of policy to support bargaining.

Takeaway #2:

**Collective bargaining will
not survive without
supportive laws & policies.
This should be a
government goal.**

A Little History

where did our
RIGHTS
come from?
The Rand Formula and the struggle for union security



A Little History



A Little History



A Little History



A Little History: PC 1003

- During World War II, for first time, government codified collective bargaining, protected the right to organize, established a process for recognizing and certifying bargaining agents, and required companies to bargain.
 - “Canada’s Wagner Act,” 1944.
 - Majoritarian system.
- Government recognized the broader social benefits of a stable collective bargaining system.
- No clarity yet on union security.

A Little History: The Rand Formula



A Little History: The Rand Formula

- Arbitrated end to 99-day strike by UAW Local 200 (now Unifor Local 200) at Ford in Windsor over union security.
- Sensible compromise: everyone who benefits from the contract, should pay toward the contract.
 - Even if they don't "join."
- Avoids the "free rider" problem that is recognized even in conventional economics:
 - If some people can access a good or service for free, its provision will be jeopardized.

“Free Riders”



Labour Rights: Always Contested

- Business never surrenders. If they are able to turn back labour rights, they will.
- History is marked by repeated attacks by business on labour rights & bargaining, whatever the excuse:
 - Early suppression in Industrial Revolution.
 - Banning unions as a “barrier to trade.”
 - 1930s: R.B. Bennett, Mitch Hepburn.
 - 1947: Taft Hartley Act (roll back Wagner Act).
 - 1970s and 1980s: Dictatorships in many countries.
 - Europe today: IMF, “troika” attacks on labour laws.
 - Canada today.

Takeaway #3:

We must be prepared and active to defend our labour rights, or they will be taken away.

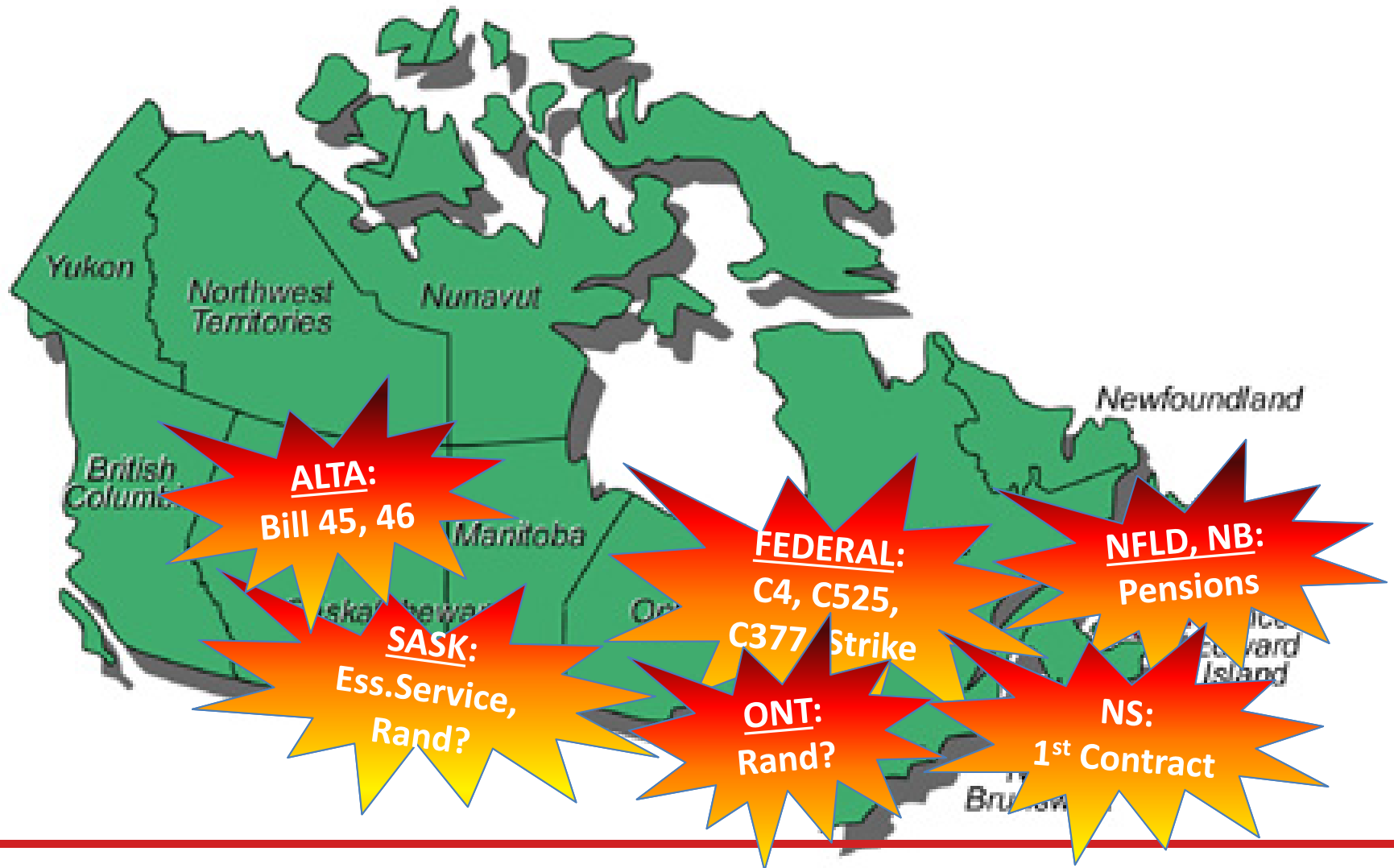
Canada: The Current Attack

- Business is more aggressive: They once tolerated unions, but now feel they can go for the jugular:
 - “We can fully roll back the postwar system.”
- Many Conservatives (not all) have made a political choice.
- Their strategy: “**Divide and Rule.**” Stoke envy among those who don’t benefit from unions, to turn against unions (instead of turning against the boss).
- **Result:** New attacks on right to organize, right to strike, right to collect dues.

A Many-Headed Monster



A Many-Headed Monster



Federal Bills

- **C-4**: “Omnibus” budget bill
 - Unilateral power to define essential service (PSLRA).
 - Undermines H&S practices, right to refuse.
- **C-525**: “Private members’ bill”
 - Prevents certification, eases decertification in federal sector (where Unifor is biggest).
 - Totally lopsided voting system.
- **C-377**: “Transparency bill” (private members’)
 - Ties up unions in red tape, exposes advocacy activity.
 - Gutted in the Senate: victory? What can we learn?

The Biggest Monster Yet...



Sir Rand

The U.S. Experience

- 1947 Taft-Hartley Act: Business-led, McCarthyist, racist backlash against Wagner Act & New Deal.
- **DON'T USE THEIR LANGUAGE**: There is no such thing as a “right to work.”
- Call it what it is: The government makes it **illegal** to negotiate union security. (Not exactly “freedom”!)
- Now covers 24 states (incl. Indiana & Michigan).
- Dramatic impact on unionization, wages.
- Spillover impact on society: poverty, risk, division.
- No consistent impact on jobs.

The U.S. Experience

	States With Check-Off	States Without Check-Off	Effect of Check-Off
Unionization Rate <i>(% of wage and salary workers, 2010)</i>	14.3%	6.5%	<i>More than double</i>
Avg. Weekly Wage <i>(\$ per week, all employees, 2011)</i>	\$925	\$760	<i>22% higher</i>
Workplace Fatalities <i>(per 100,000 workers, 2009)</i>	3.7	5.2	<i>30% lower</i>
Family Poverty Rate <i>(% of families below poverty level)</i>	9%	11%	<i>2 points lower</i>
Education Spending <i>(state and local spending per K-12 pupil)</i>	\$12,730	\$9,300	<i>37% higher</i>
Manufacturing Jobs <i>(decline since 2000)</i>	-33%	-30%	<i>Bad all around</i>

Rand Formula Lies

- It's "**forced unionism**":
 - But workers must vote to form the bargaining unit (and can vote to end it, if they aren't happy).
 - And ratify a contract with dues check-off in it.
 - They're always free to leave a well-paid union job!
- **Canada is the only country** requiring union dues:
 - Remember: the Rand Formula is only relevant to the majoritarian system in Canada and the U.S.
 - Other countries have other systems, all aimed at supporting collective bargaining – all paying for cost of bargaining.
 - The U.S. is the outlier (lowest coverage in industrial world), and should not be our role model.

Diversity of International Experience



- **Germany**: Mandated works councils, sector-wide collective agreements.



- **Scandinavia**: Unions deliver social services, solidifying their coverage & financial base.



- **Australia**: Sector minimum agreements, unions have access to all workplaces.



- **Brazil**: Government collects a bargaining tax, forwards it to unions.

Unifor's “Rights at Work” Campaign

- Top priority for our new union (and the whole labour movement).
- Must show that unions play a broader role in building the middle class and a healthy society.
- Must build alliances with moderate voices, isolate extreme Conservatives.
- Given the political problems faced by Harper, Hudak, and others, this **IS** a campaign we **CAN** win.
 - Cement labour rights for another generation.

Takeaway #4:

**We CAN win this fight, if we
are ready and active.
Conservatives are
vulnerable, and this could
be a historic win.**

“Rights at Work”: Strategy

1. **Educate** our members about labour rights, their history, and the threat we face.
2. Change the **public conversation** about unions and what we do (including by proposing positive reforms to labour law, not just resisting changes).
3. Mobilize support from **potential allies** among social partners, employers, enlightened Conservatives.
4. Increase the **political cost** on Conservatives for attacking labour rights and bargaining.
5. **Mobilize** our members and supporters before, during, and after upcoming elections.

“Rights at Work”: Elements

1. **Education** activities with membership (leadership tour).
2. Take campaign **through the union** (national and local).
3. **Canvass** every Unifor member with a “Rights at Work” card (with information on labour rights).
4. **Lobbying** / meetings / letters to politicians (federal, incl. Senate, and provincial), from leadership and from members.
5. Target vulnerable or “slim win” **Conservatives**.
6. Systematic approaches to **employers** to oppose attack on Rand (publicly or privately).
7. Systematic outreach & alliance-building with **local allies** (other unions, social movements, community agencies, others).
8. Marshall **research** evidence and experts to speak about benefits and social effects of collective bargaining.
9. Prepare for **workplace action** to defend labour laws.

The Canvass: Start With Our Members

- **Core idea**: Speak with every Unifor member, remind them where their rights came from, explain the current threat, and ask for their support.
- **The tool**: A “Rights at Work” card.
 - Better than any loyalty or air miles card!
 - After all, it’s union cards that created the middle class.
 - Unique features (QR code, screen cleaner).
 - Contains key facts on value of labour rights and bargaining.
 - Not a membership card (but could have name and local info).
- Approach each member to explain the campaign, give them their card & information, have a conversation.

The Canvass



FRONT



BACK



Timeline

- **Late February:**
 - Begin printing the cards and distribute to locals.
 - Telephone town halls to introduce the campaign to individual members.
 - Briefings for local leaders to plan the canvass.
- Perform the canvass in **March, April, May.**
- At same time: Systematic outreach in community:
 - Lobbying, approaches to employers, social allies.
- Wrap up canvass by **late spring.**

Local To Do List

1. Assemble membership lists.
 - To get personalized cards printed, develop tally lists.
 - Can use contractual right to information from employer.
2. Map your workplaces.
3. Determine best time / place / form for the canvass.
 - Plant gates? Breaks? Cafeteria? Special meetings?
4. Appoint coordinator in each workplace.
 - Barg. unit chair or designate; liaison for Memb.Mob.
5. See a briefing.
6. Perform the canvass; report progress to area office.
 - Treat it like an election campaign!

Remember the Takeaways:

- 1. Unions and collective bargaining are essential to a healthy society.**
- 2. Bargaining requires supportive labour laws & policy to exist.**
- 3. We must be ready to defend our labour rights, or we will lose them.**
- 4. We CAN win a historic struggle to save our rights for a generation.**

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Table Exercise

- We will encounter criticism and counter-arguments as we promote the message that labour rights and collective bargaining build a better society.
 - Sometimes from our own members.
- What are some of these counter-arguments?
- Let's practice some of our responses.
- Form small groups. Fill out worksheet together. We'll reconvene to discuss.

Report-Back

- You've identified some of the key arguments we will face as we take this campaign to our members, and into the broader community.
- Let's discuss the arguments, and how we respond.
- We've developed some ideas, based on previous brainstorming sessions...

Tough Question #1

Why am I forced to pay union dues?

Possible Responses:

- The majority of workers in your workplace voted to form a union (and could vote to decertify if they didn't want a union).
- The majority of workers in your workplace voted to approve a contract that includes dues check-off (and could vote to change that if they didn't want it).
- The level of your dues is determined democratically by the elected local delegates to Unifor convention.
- Dues payments therefore reflect the majority decision.
- You benefit from the contract, and the services of the union. It wouldn't be fair to others if you didn't pay a fair share.

Tough Question #2

Unions are pricing Canada out of competition. We have to cut wages, or we will lose our jobs.

Possible Responses:

- Some of the most successful countries in world exports have even stronger unions (Germany, Scandinavia, Brazil).
- Low wages can't guarantee your job. Someone else will always work for less. We should emphasize quality and innovation.
- By boosting purchasing power, unions help job-creation.
- US states that banned union security did not do better than other states in avoiding the recession and losing jobs.
- The Canadian dollar is falling back to normal levels. That will help our international position a lot.

Tough Question #3

It should be an individual “choice” to pay dues.

Possible Responses:

- It is certainly a democratic choice to pay dues, but it shouldn't be an individual one.
- Our workplaces are not individualized. We work together, and our compensation and working conditions affect us all.
- The current system is fair: “majority rules.”
- We decide as a group (through card-check or ballot) to form a union, and the union must fairly represent everyone in the workplace.
- It's only fair that everyone who benefits from a collective agreement, pays a fair share toward maintaining it.

Tough Question #4

I am not happy with my union. I shouldn't have to pay dues to them.

Possible Responses:

- Everyone in Canada has experienced tough times in recent years, including unionized workplaces.
- Unions have fought hard to resist the downward pressure on workers, wages, and working conditions.
- Things would have been much worse without a union to hold the line, and maintain a collective voice against concessions.
- Unions are democratic organizations. You have a voice in your union. If you are not happy with how your union is performing, get involved to make a change.

Tough Question #5

I don't even know what the union does with my money, so I don't want to pay.

Possible Responses:

- Unifor is constitutionally required, both nationally and locally, to have financial reports for its membership.
- Financial reports are regularly audited, both nationally and locally.
- Your elected leaders make the best judgments about how to use dues revenues to support bargaining and other union activities – but if members disagree, that can be changed.
- Unlike corporations, the union's finances are driven by, and accountable to, the interests of their members.

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