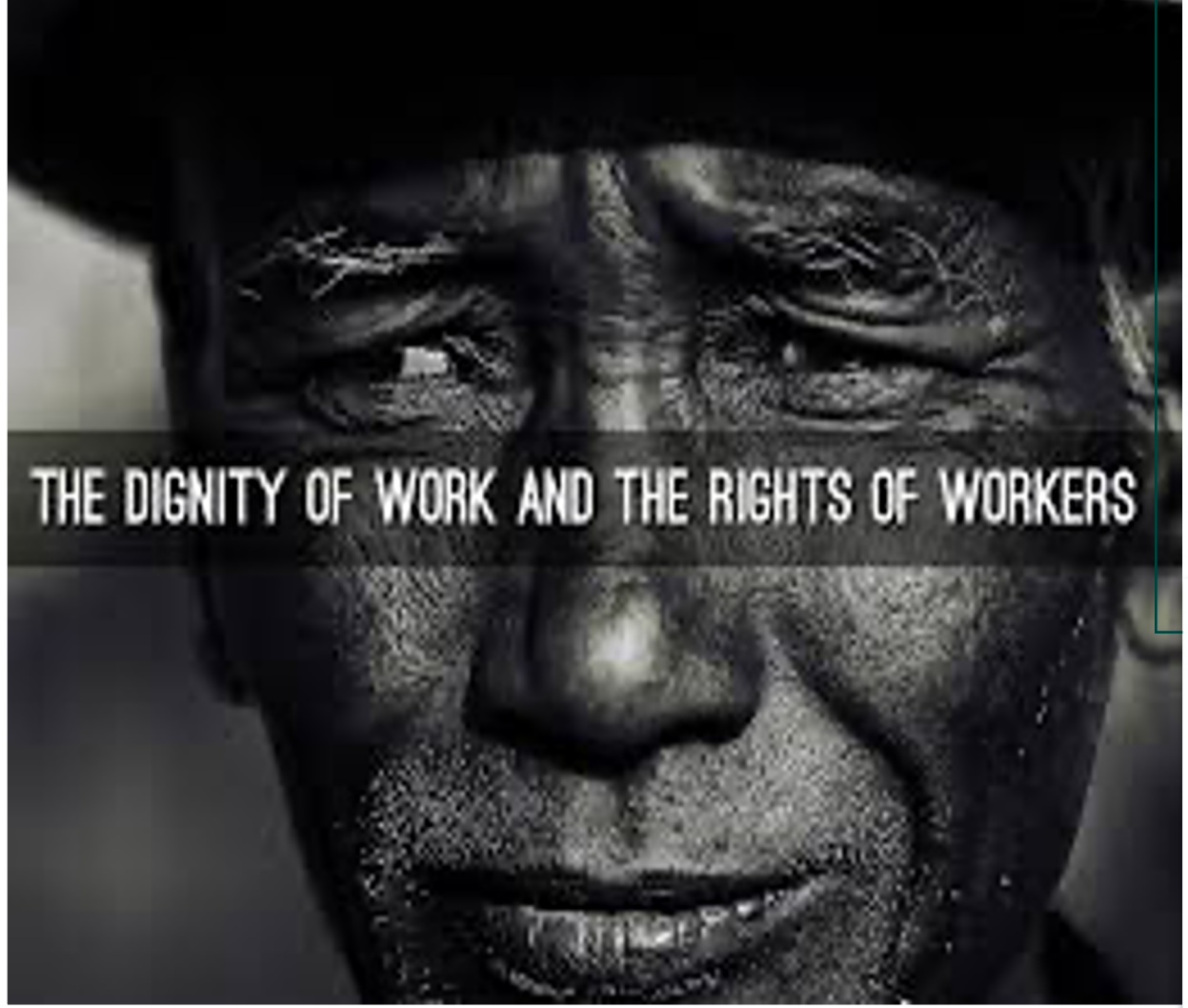
WHY UNIONS MATTER

Presented by Diane Thomas-Holladay
Labor Education Program
Little Rock, AR

Unions play a critical role in balancing power

Political
and
Economic
Democracy

Economic Dignity

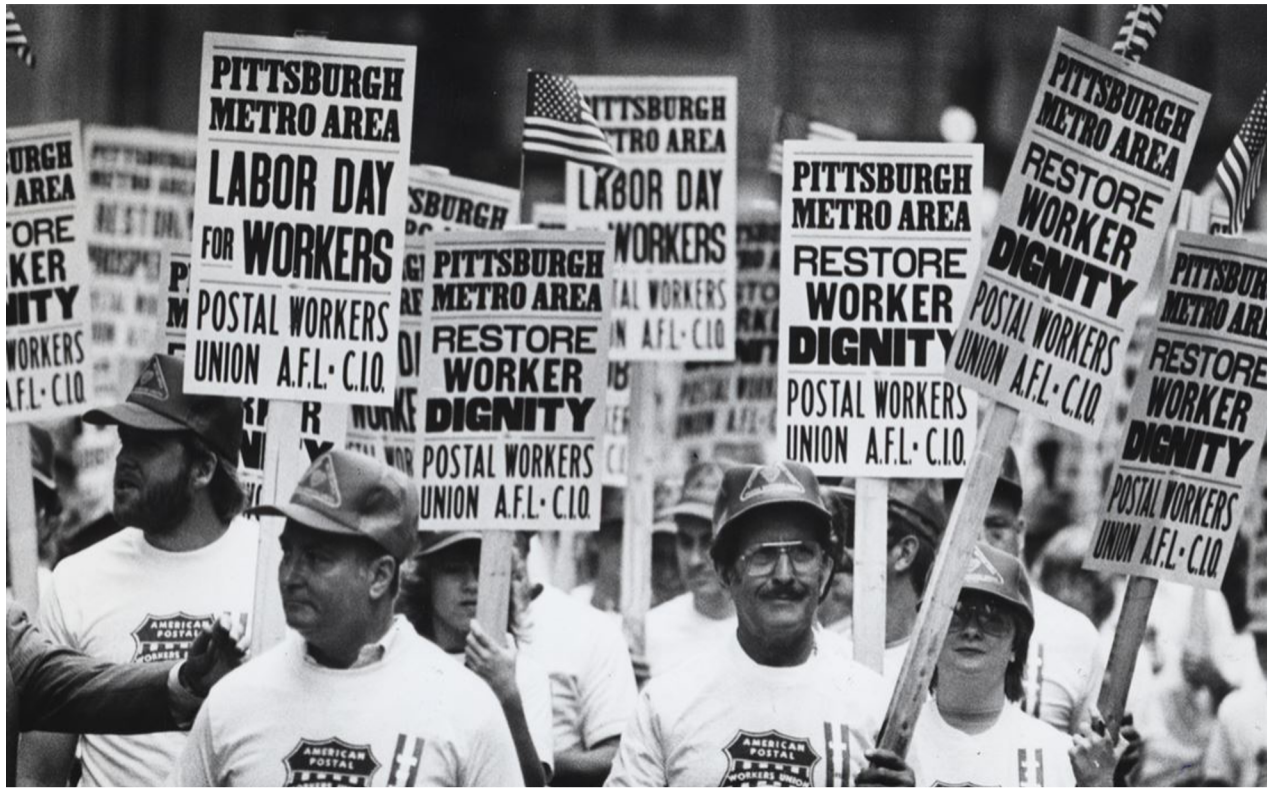


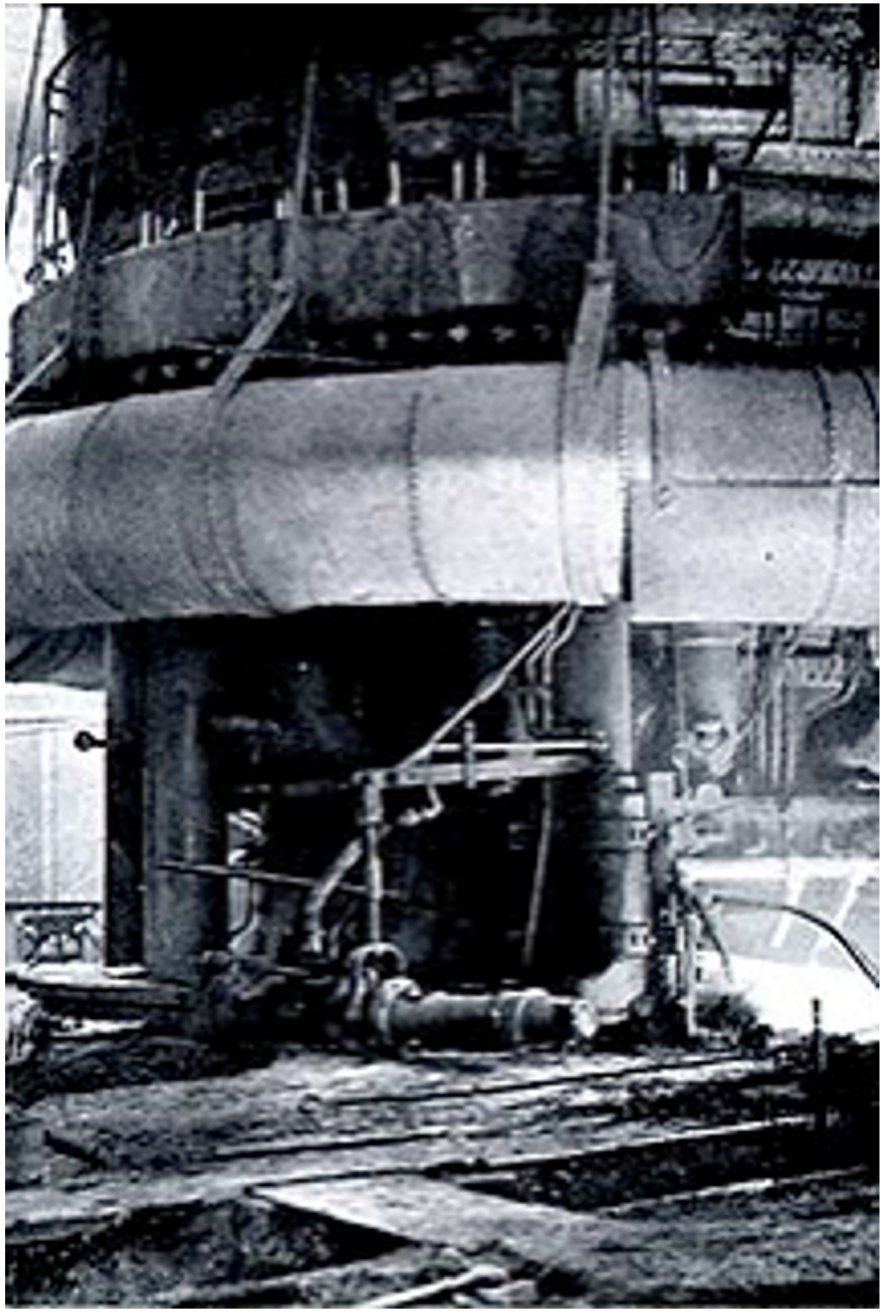
Economic Dignity

Capacity to

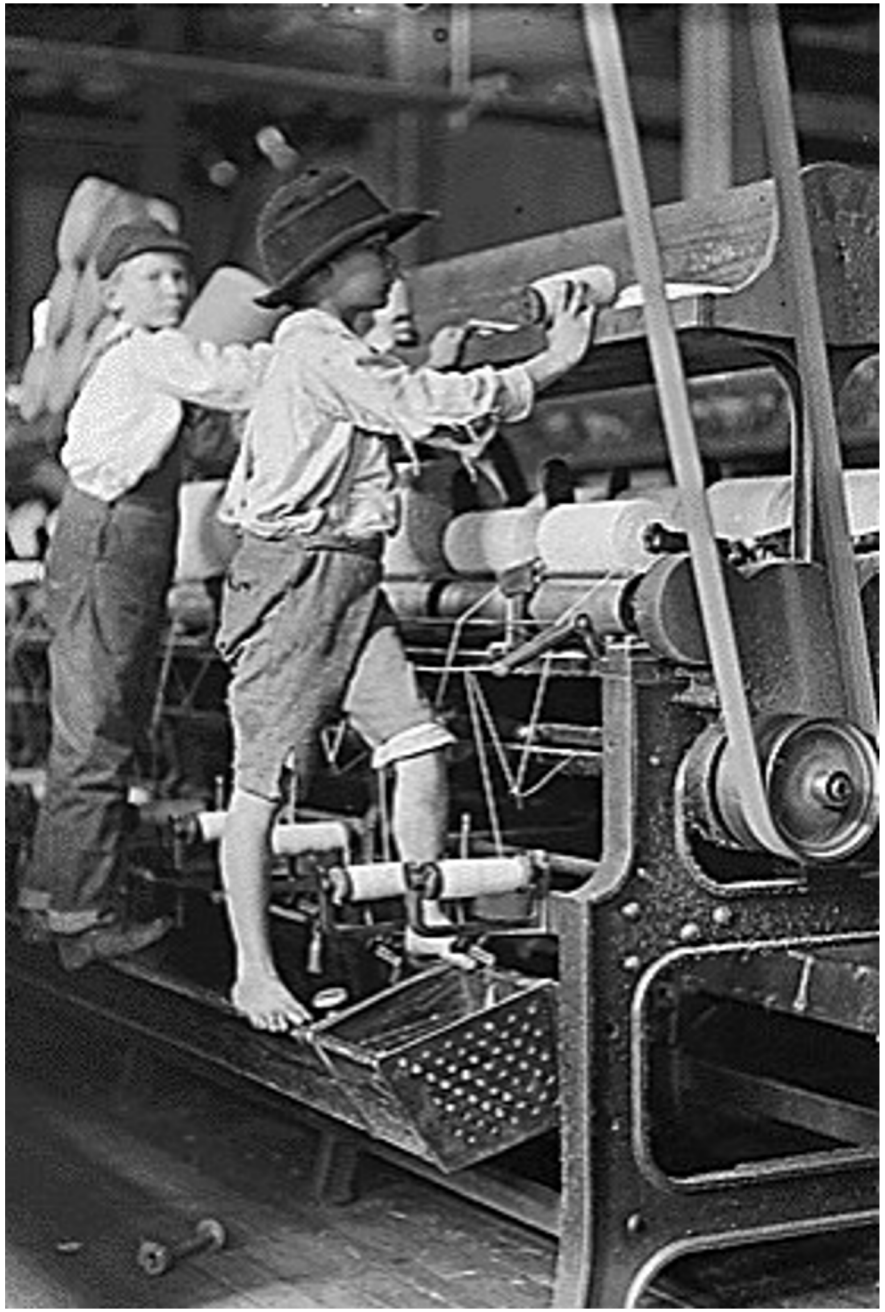
- ***care for a family***
- pursue your ***potential*** and ***purpose***

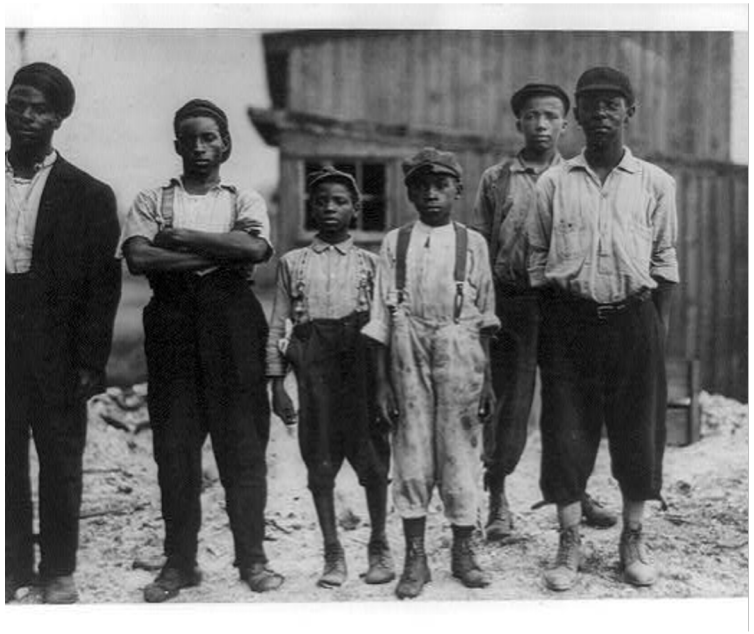
Economic participation ***without domination and humiliation***





Harsh and exhausting conditions





Child Labor

Whole families working . . .

Children in the mines

“Laissez Faire”

Economic Individualism

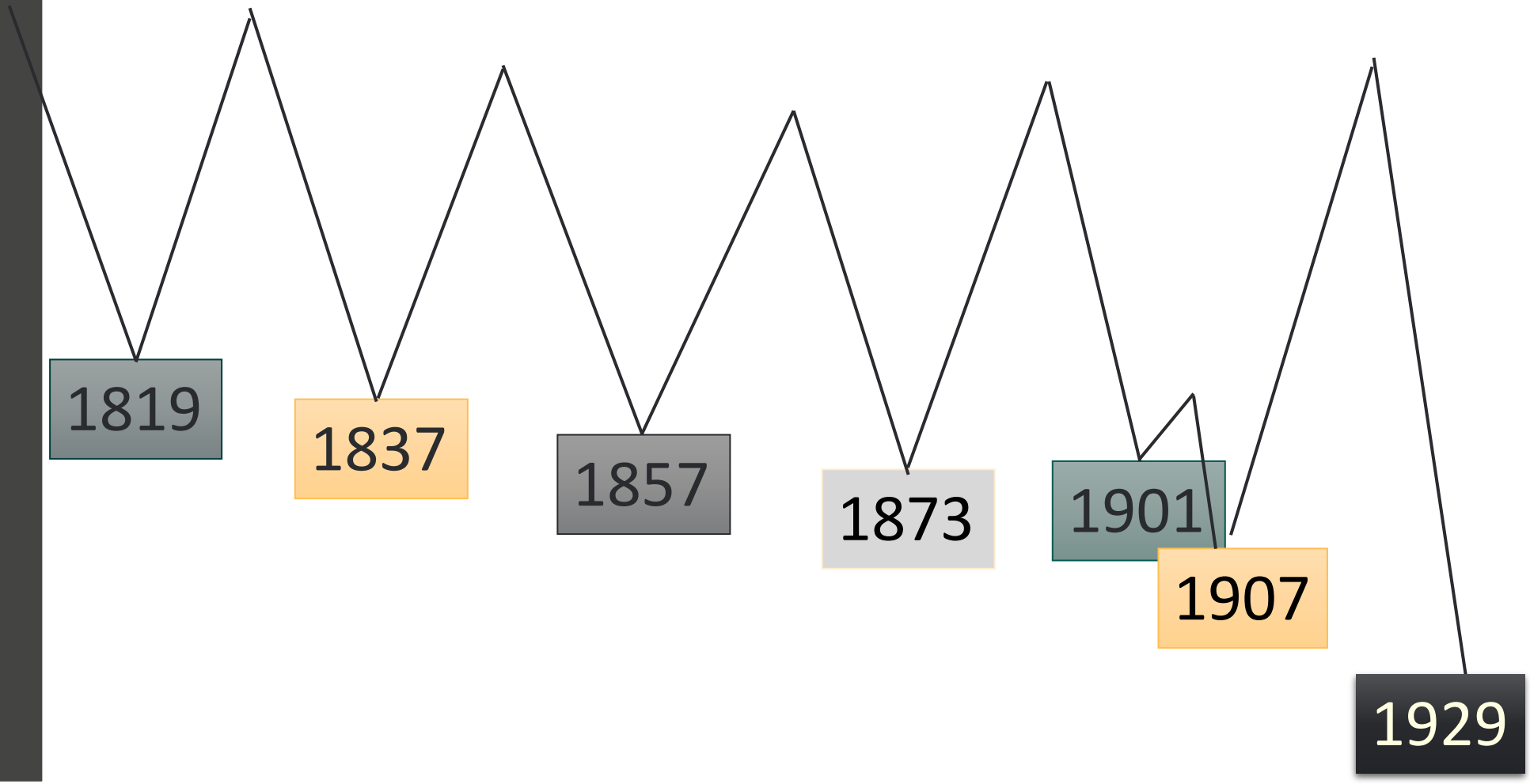
Government role in economy limited to maintaining *peace* and *property rights.*

- *Free markets*
- *Few gov’t regulations*
- *No “safety net”*
- *Assist businesses and corporations*

Individuals free to carry out their economic affairs

- *Self reliant*
- *Independent*

U.S. Financial Panics



Employer Response to Unions

"I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half."

Jay Gould, Railroad Baron

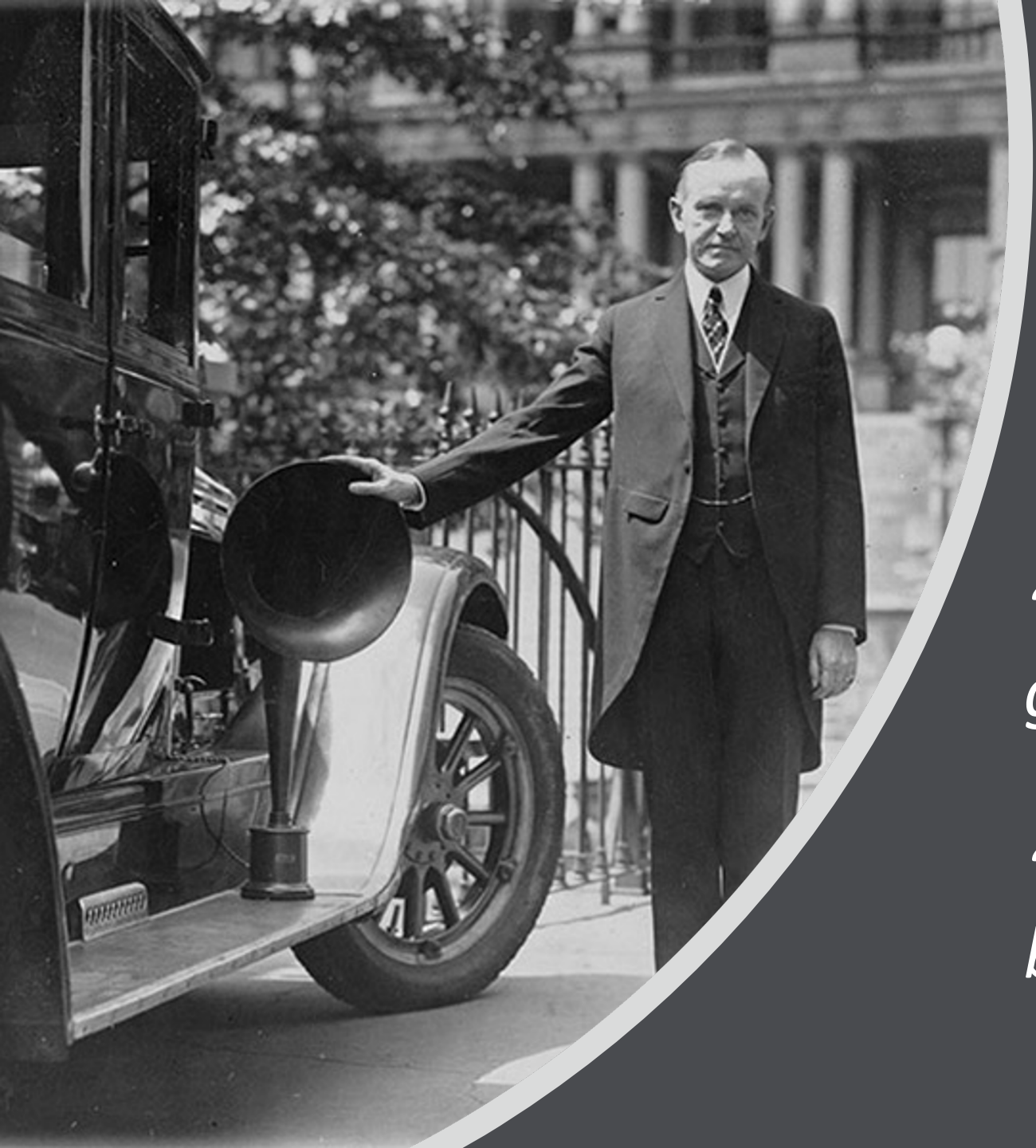
(Speaking of the Knights of Labor strike against the Gould Railways in 1886)

Robber Barons and Power

Roaring Twenties!

A chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.

Herbert Hoover, campaigning in 1928



1920s
Culture of Business

“What’s good for business is good for the country.”

“The business of America is business.”

President Calvin Coolidge

1920s an era of . . .

Ku Klux Klan march in Washington DC
1926

Anti-unionism

Racism

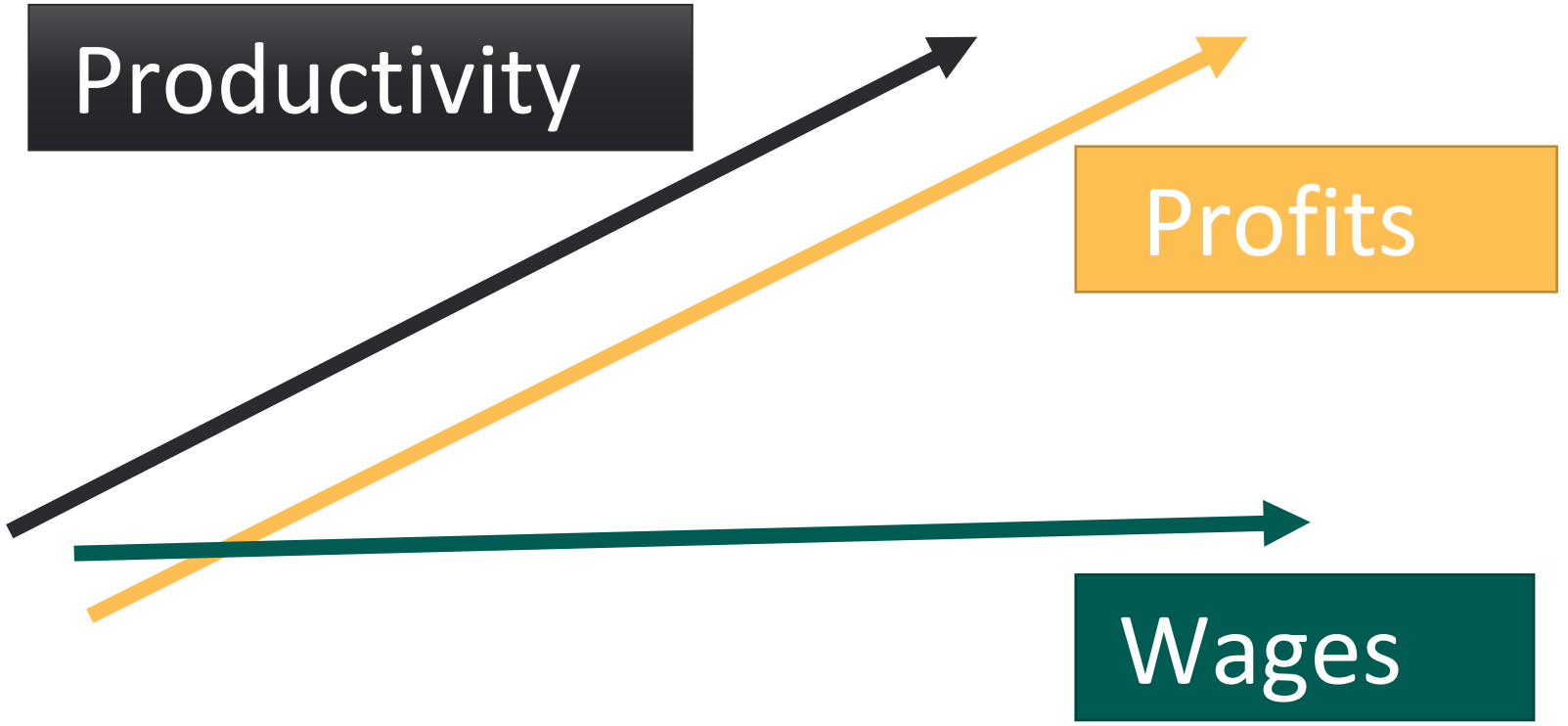
Anti-immigration

“Red baiting”

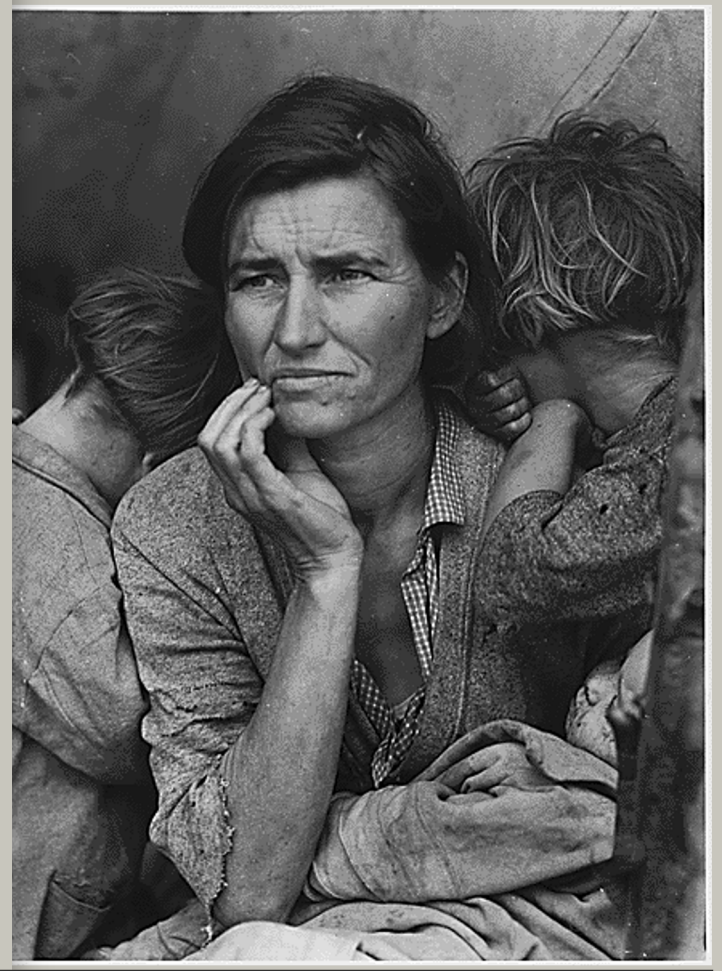
Loss of Union Power in 1920s

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States

1920s Economy



Breadline, NYC, 1932



The Great Depression

1932

23.6%

1931

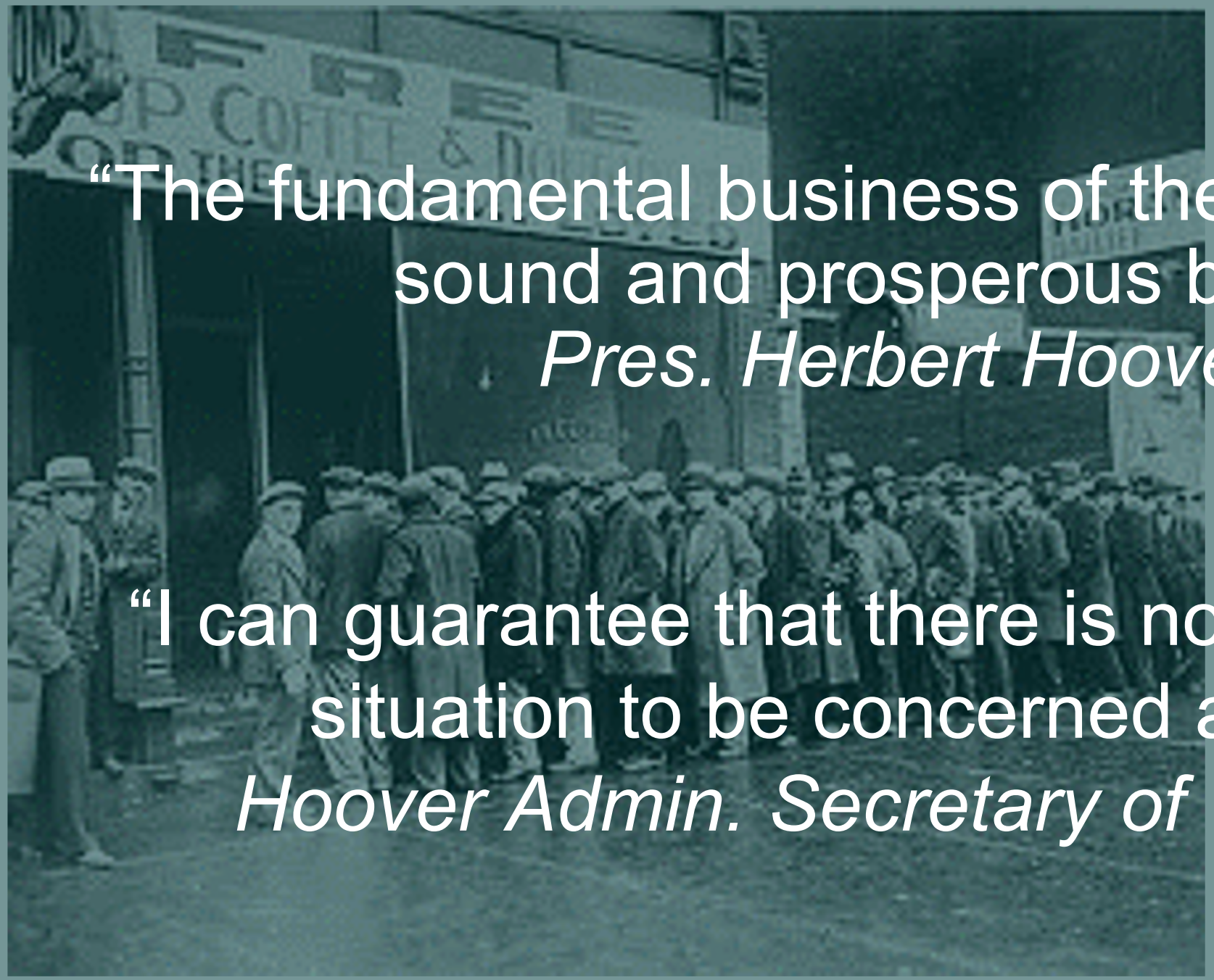
15.9%

1929

3.2 %

Unemployment

Early Years

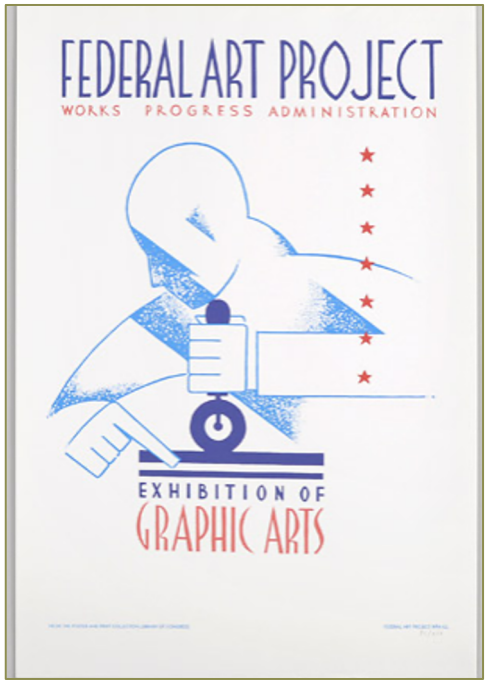


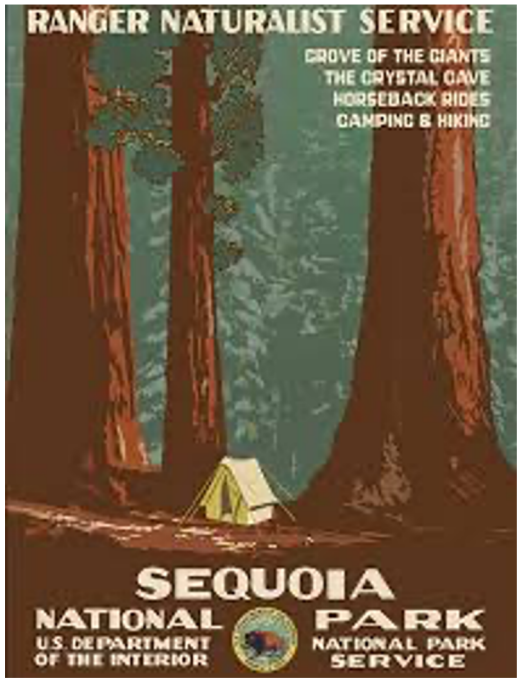
"The fundamental business of the nation is on a sound and prosperous basis."
Pres. Herbert Hoover

"I can guarantee that there is nothing in this situation to be concerned about."
Hoover Admin. Secretary of Treasury

The Hoover administration's response to the Great Depression . .

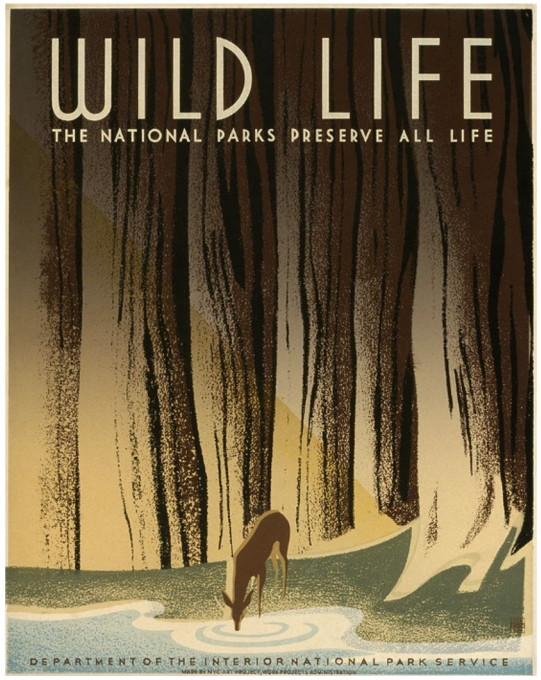
32nd President: FDR
1933 – 1945
“The New Deal”


FEDERAL ART PROJECT
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
EXHIBITION OF
GRAPHIC ARTS

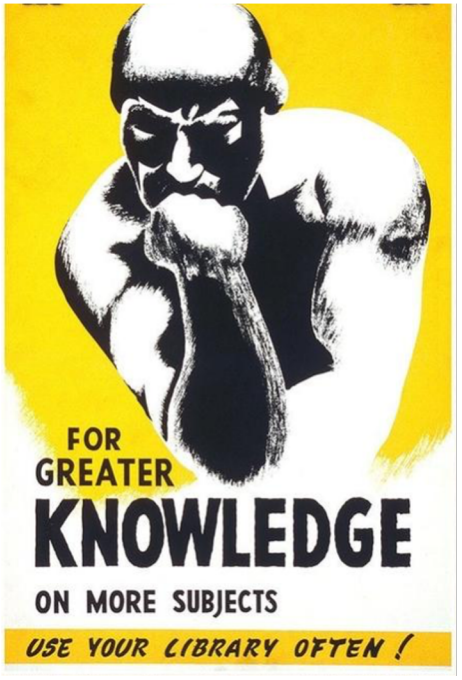

RANGER NATURALIST SERVICE
GROVE OF THE GIANTS
THE CRYSTAL CAVE
HORSEBACK RIDES
CAMPING & HIKING
SEQUOIA
NATIONAL PARK
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

EXHIBITION
FEDERAL ART PROJECT W.P.A.
INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN

A YOUNG MAN'S OPPORTUNITY
CCC
FOR WORK PLAY STUDY & HEALTH
APPLICATIONS TAKEN BY
ILLINOIS EMERGENCY RELIEF COMMISSION
ILLINOIS SELECTING AGENCY

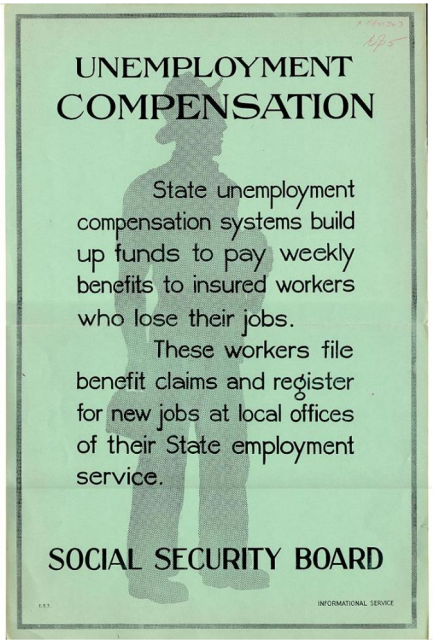

WILD LIFE
THE NATIONAL PARKS PRESERVE ALL LIFE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Work Pays America!
PROSPERITY
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION


FOR GREATER
KNOWLEDGE
ON MORE SUBJECTS
USE YOUR LIBRARY OFTEN!

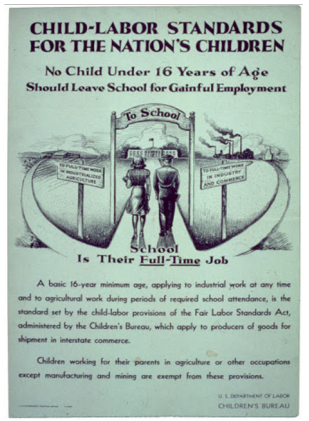
Carmen
PRESENTED BY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY OPERA ASSOCIATION
AND THE
FEDERAL MUSIC PROJECT
BALLET DIRECTED BY
MADAME BIANCA

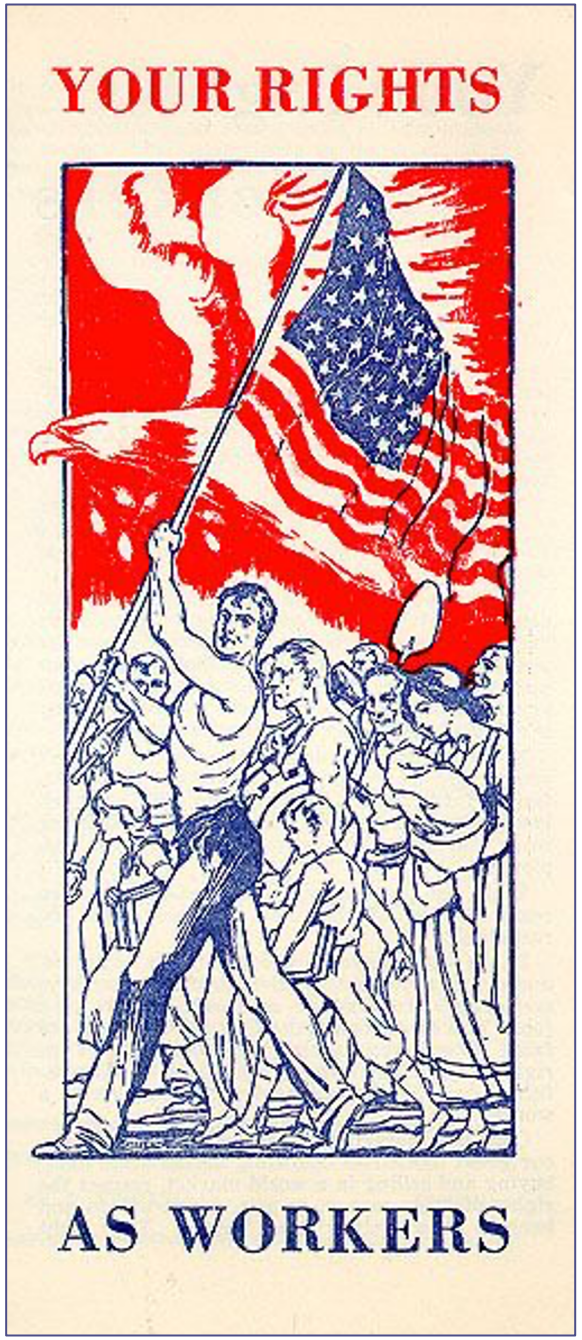
WOMEN WORK FOR VICTORY
Farm
Office
Factory
APPLY NEAREST U.S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICE OR STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL, HARTFORD



Created a Social Safety Net

- ✓ Unemployment insurance
- ✓ Social Security





Labor Legislation

- ✓ Fair Labor Standards Act
- ✓ NLRA

National Labor Relations Act 1935
Section 7 Rights

Right to . . .

Form, join, or assist
labor organizations

Bargain collectively through a representative of own choosing

Engage in
concerted activity

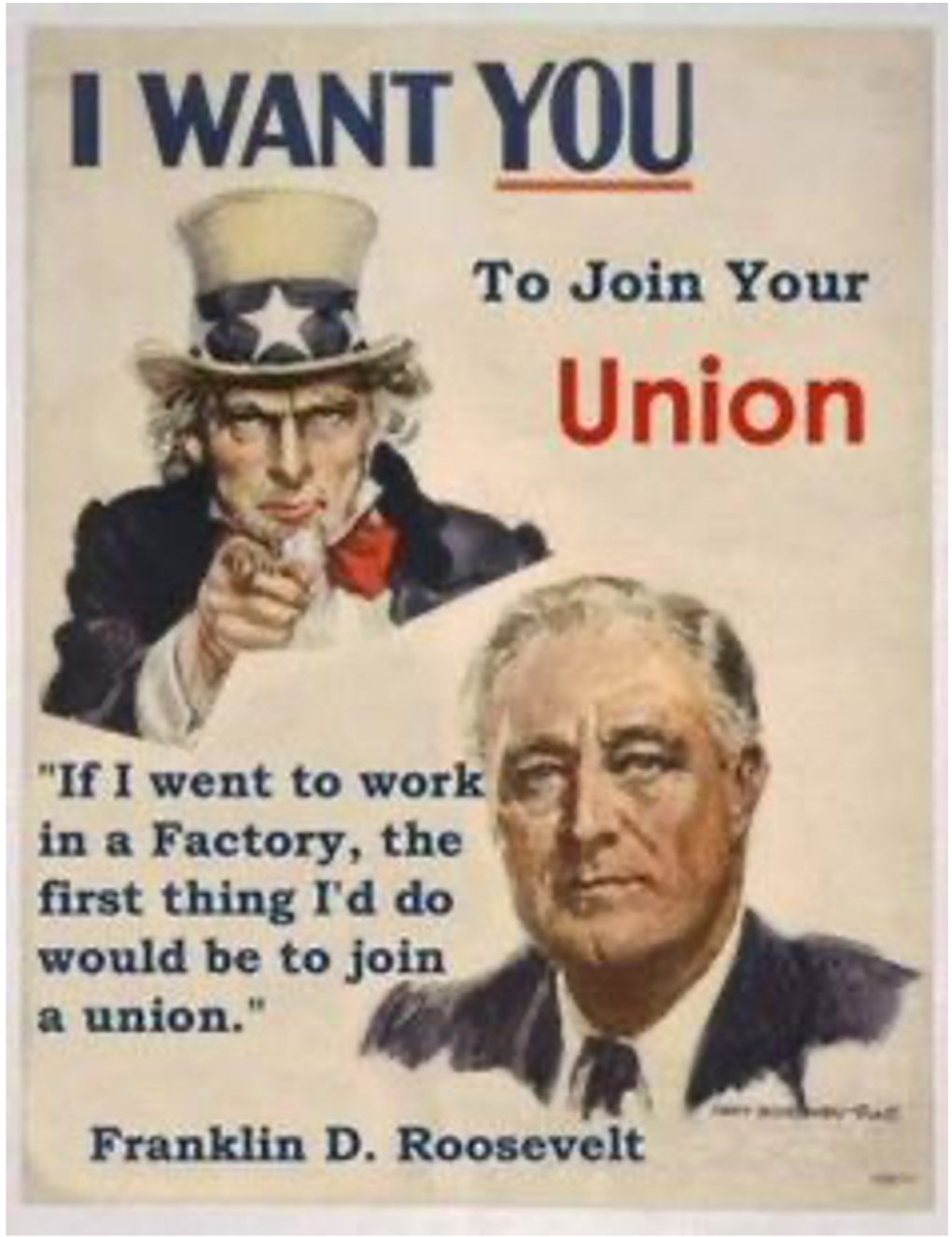
Animation Guild, 1947

National Labor Relations Act
(Wagner Act)

Preamble (excerpt)

Demand Side Economics

"The ***inequality of bargaining power*** between employees who do not possess full freedom of association . . . ***tends to aggravate recurrent business depressions, by depressing wage rates and the purchasing power of wage earners in industry . . .***"



Effect of NLRA

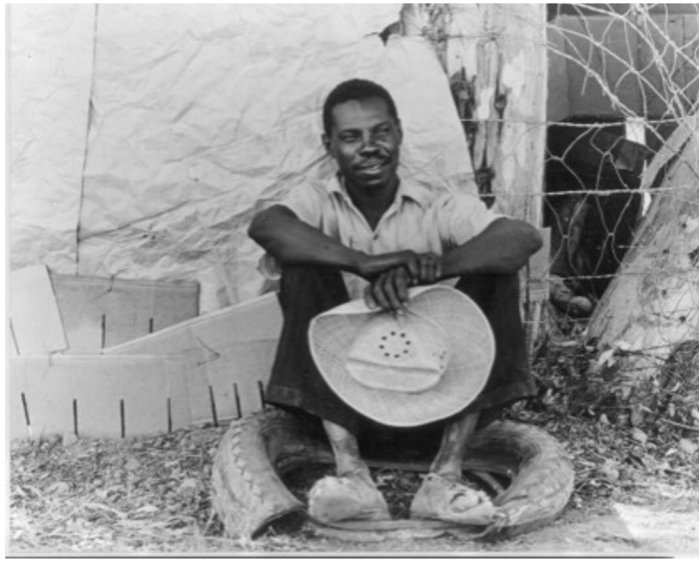
1947

15 million members

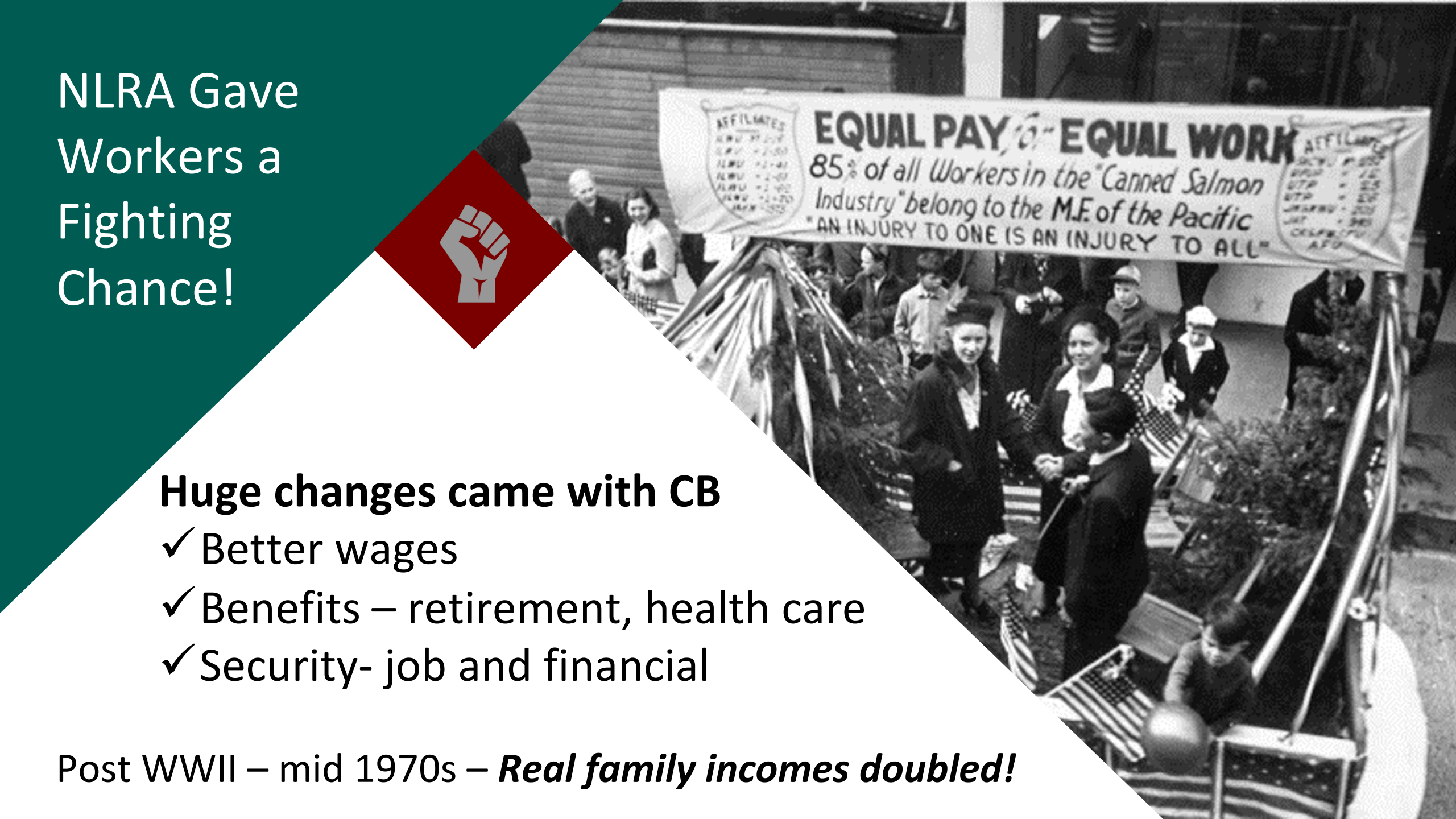
1935

3 million members

The past was not perfect.



NLRA Gave Workers a Fighting Chance!

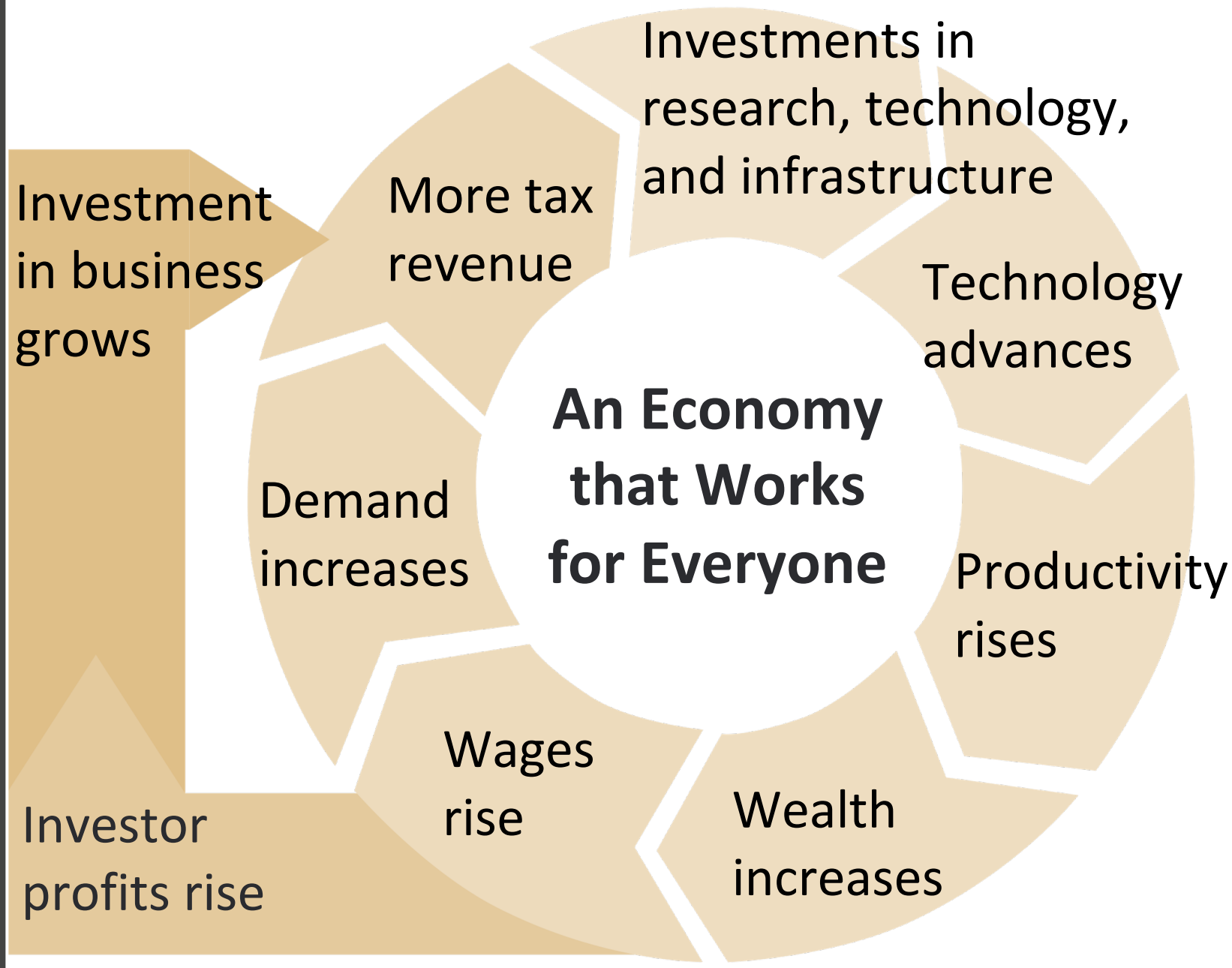


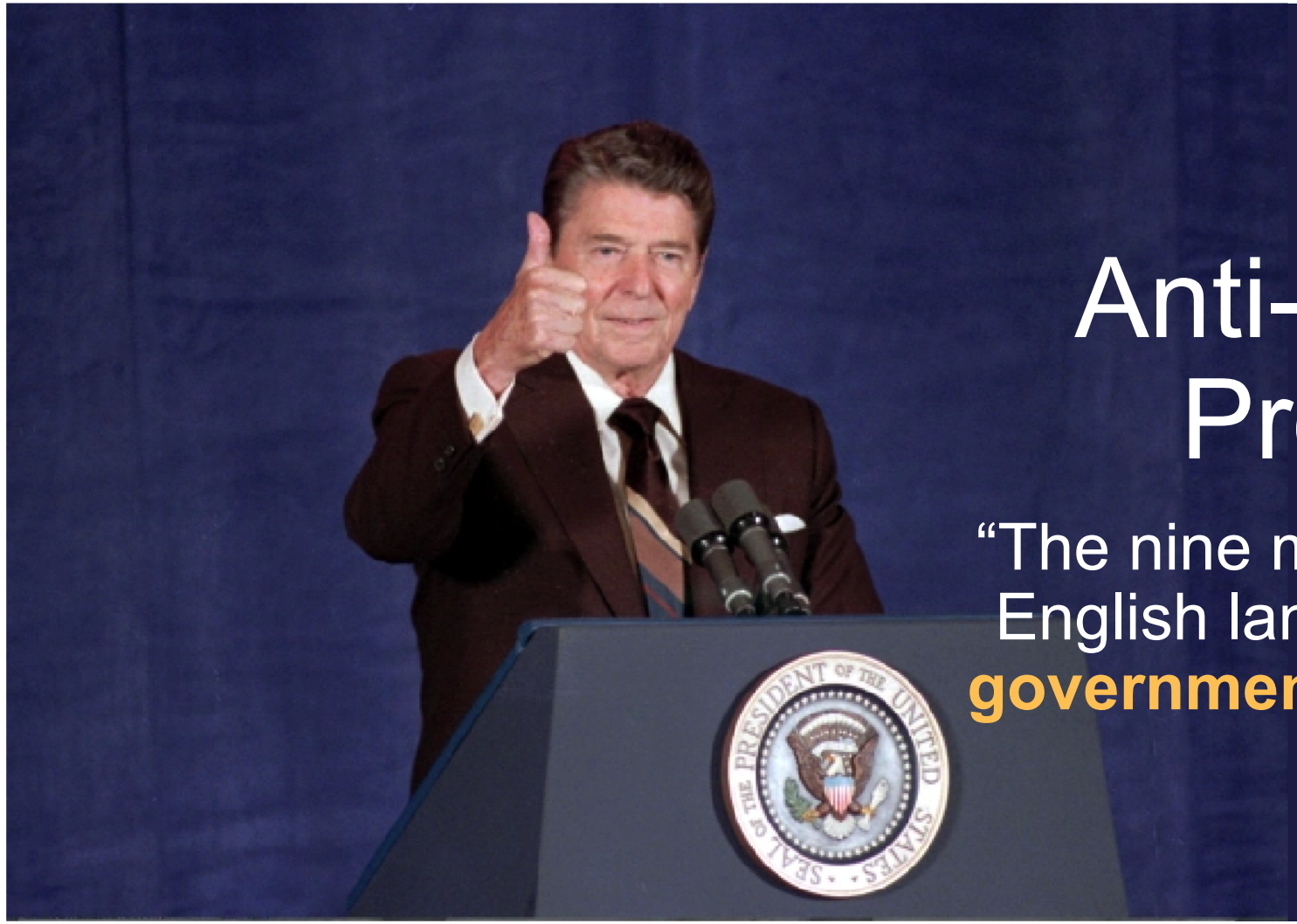
Huge changes came with CB

- ✓Better wages
- ✓Benefits – retirement, health care
- ✓Security- job and financial

Post WWII – mid 1970s – ***Real family incomes doubled!***

The Virtuous Cycle





1980s Anti-Government/ Pro-Business

"The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: **'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.' "**

"Government is not the solution to our problems - government **IS** the problem. . ." *President Ronald Reagan*

Privatize Gov't Services

Cut the Safety Net

Deregulate

Tax cuts for the wealthy and Corporations

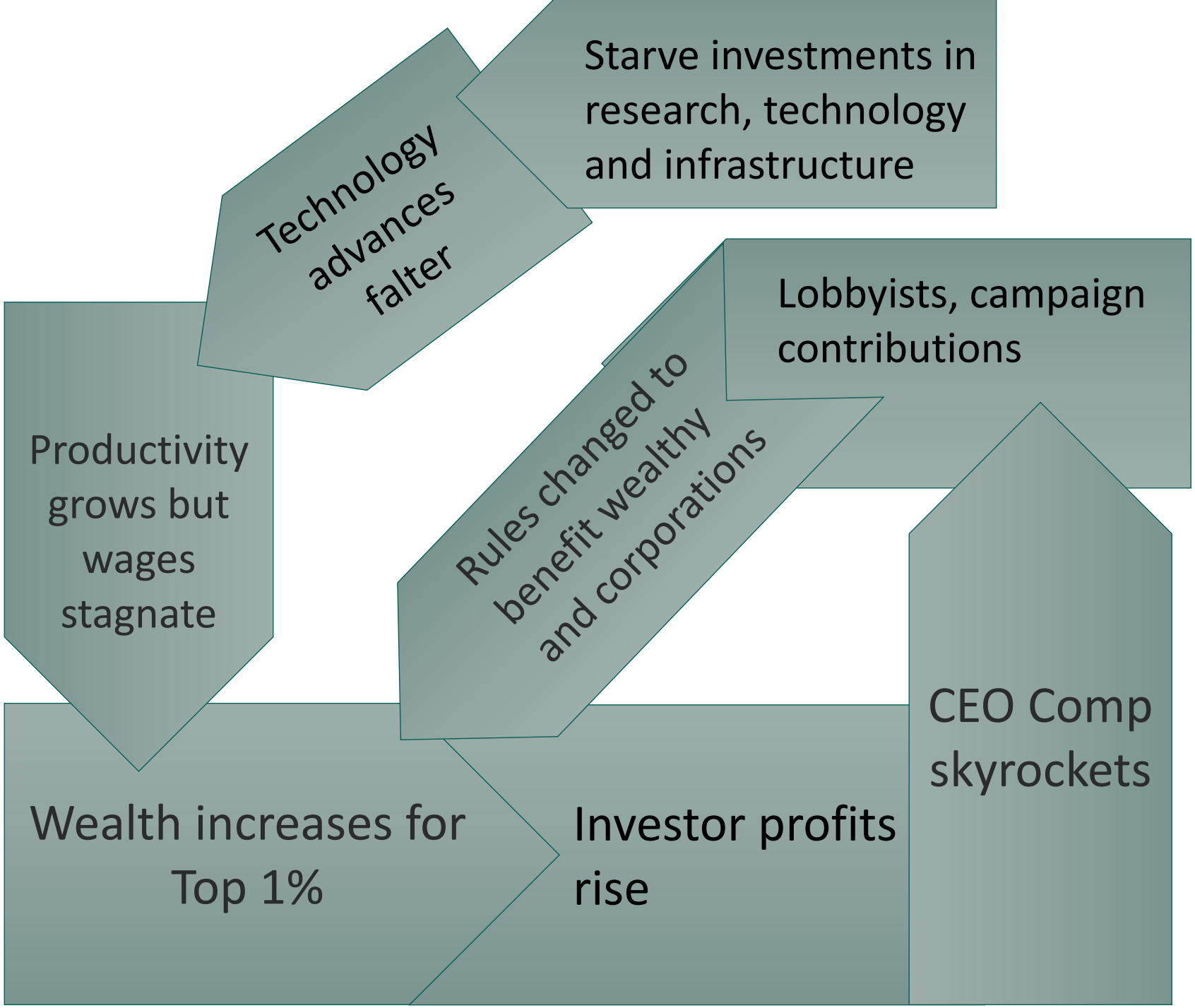
PATCO
O'HARE
patco
AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS'
CONTRACT
EXPIRED!!
LOCAL 326
patco
AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS'
ON
STRIKE
LOCAL
patco
AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS'
ON
STRIKE

HELP WANTED
$7.25/Hour
PART-TIME ONLY
NO BENEFITS
NO UNION

CEO
WANTED
$31.3
MILLION/YEAR
+ BONUSES
FULL BENEFITS
STOCK OPTIONS

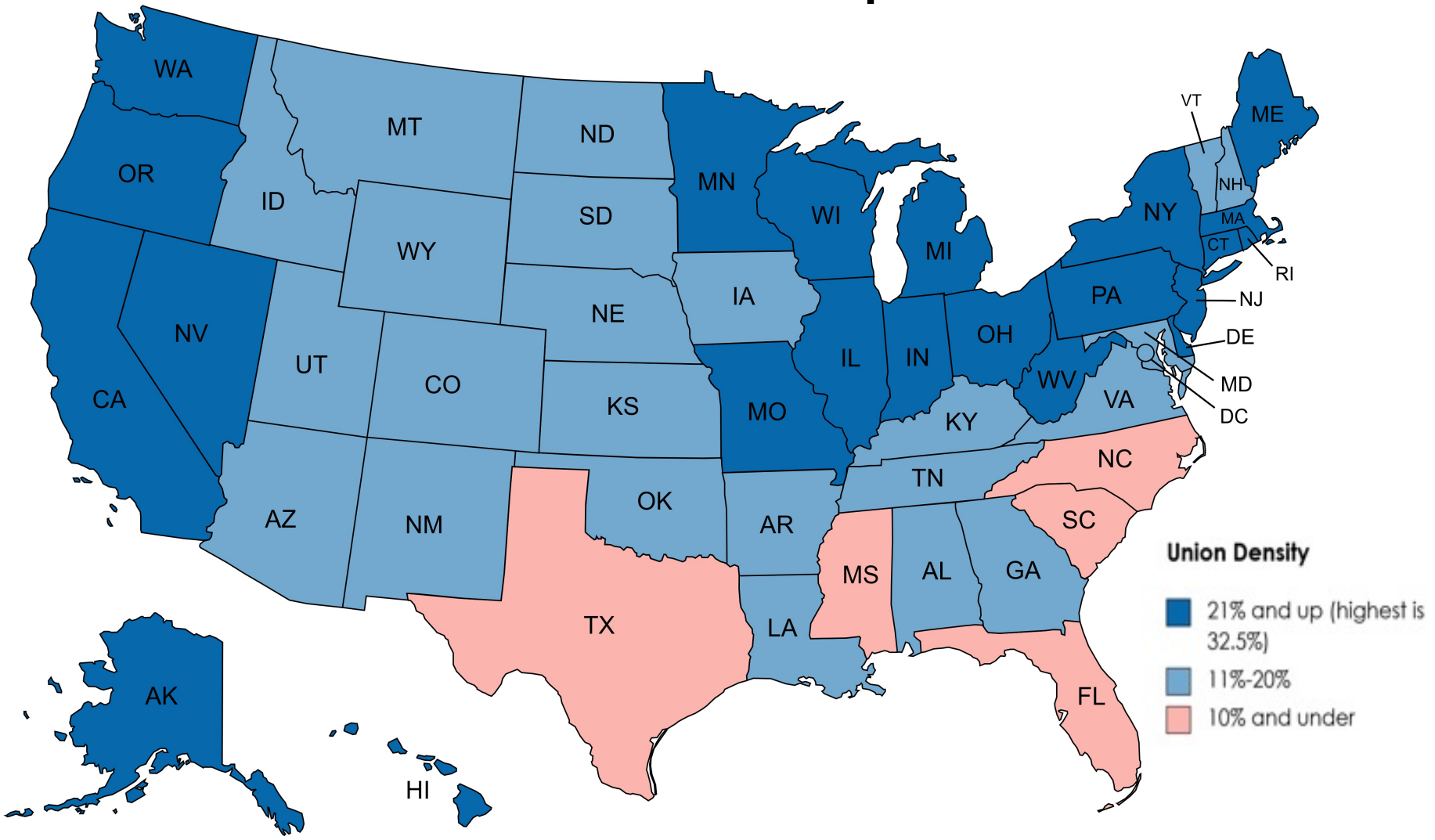
The Vicious Cycle

Economy for the 1%



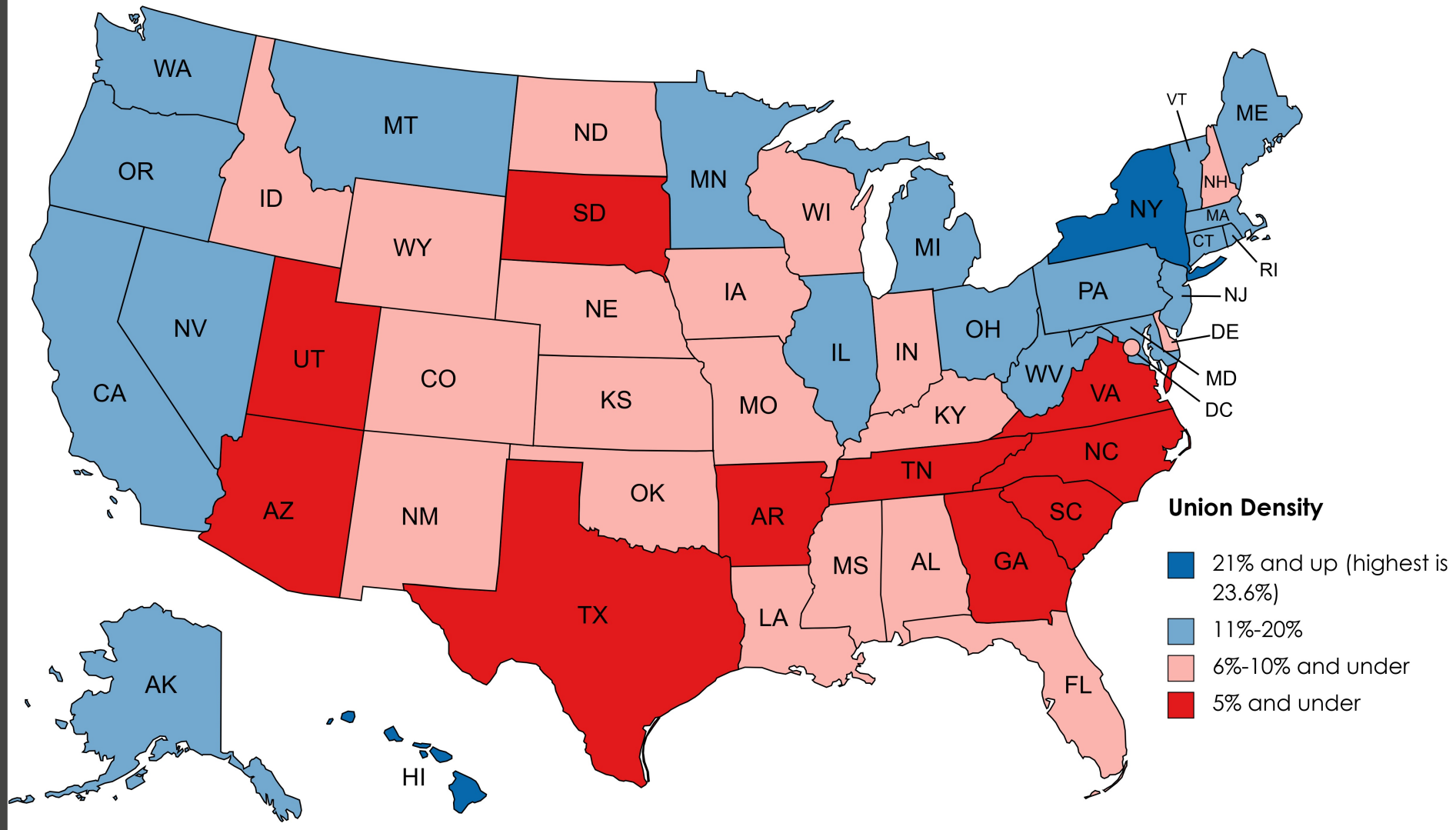
In 1983, only 5 states had union density of 10% or less

Union Membership in 1983



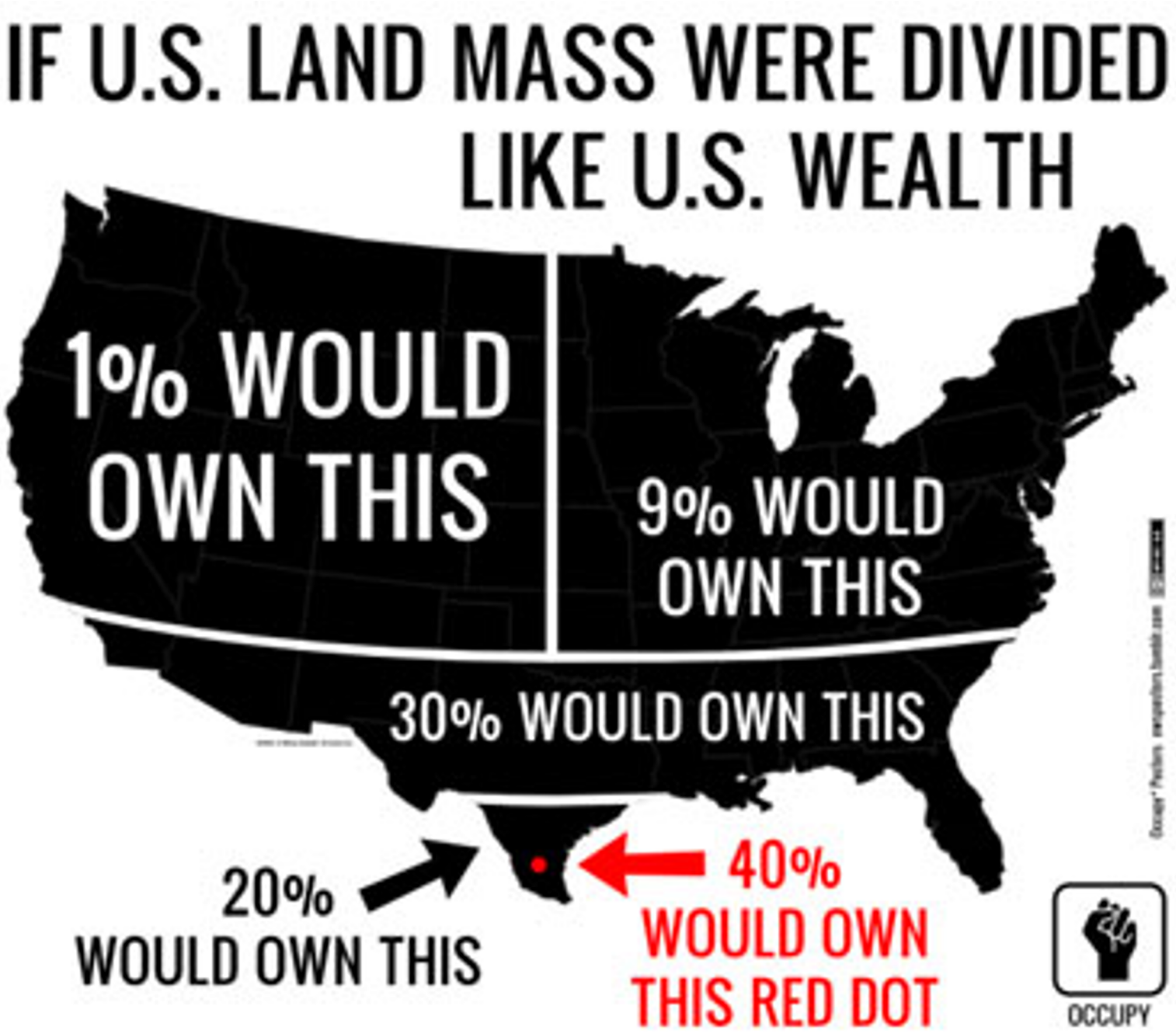
Half the states have 10% or less union density

Union Membership in 2020



The Big Divide

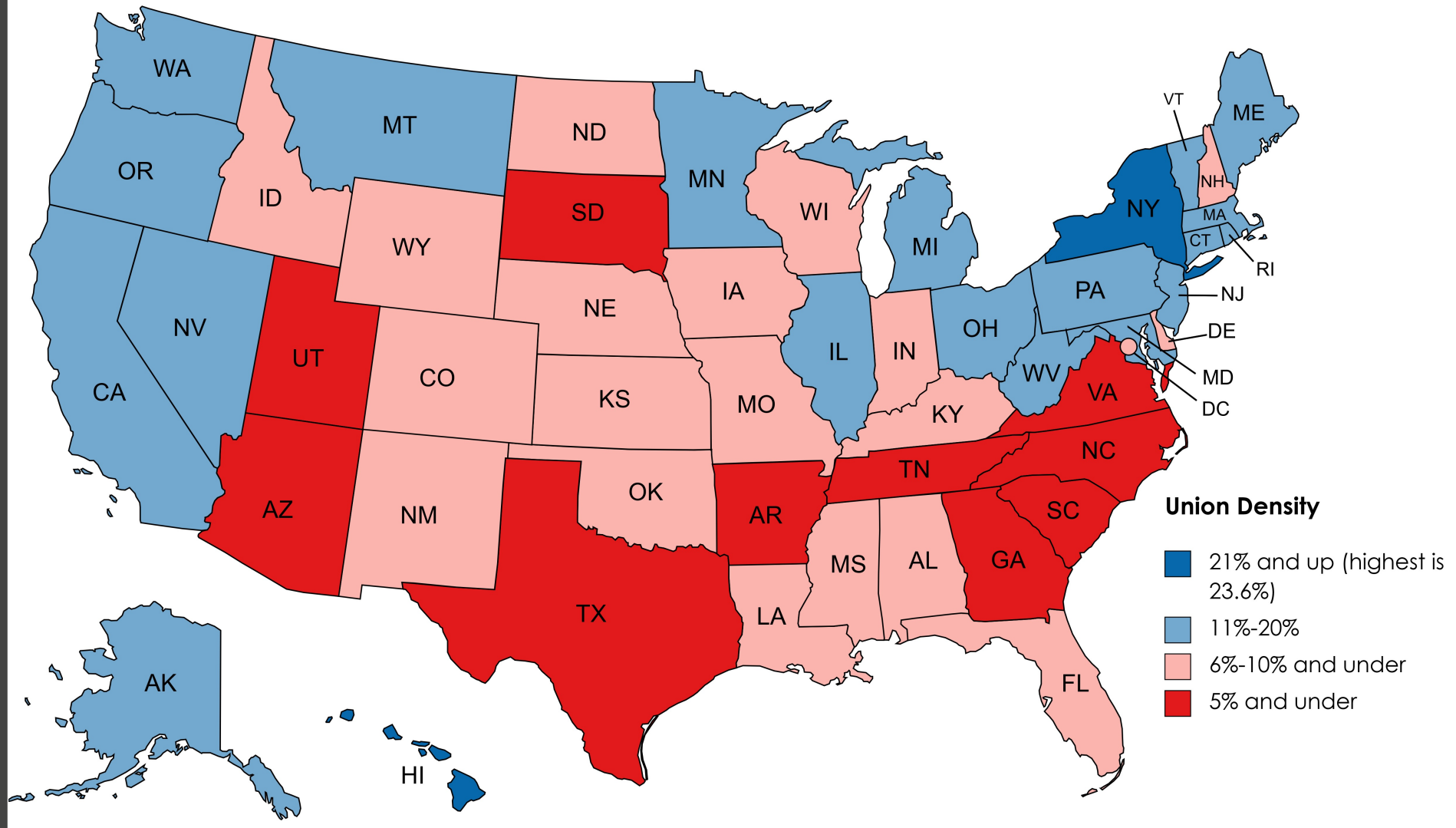
Democracy
versus
Oligarchy



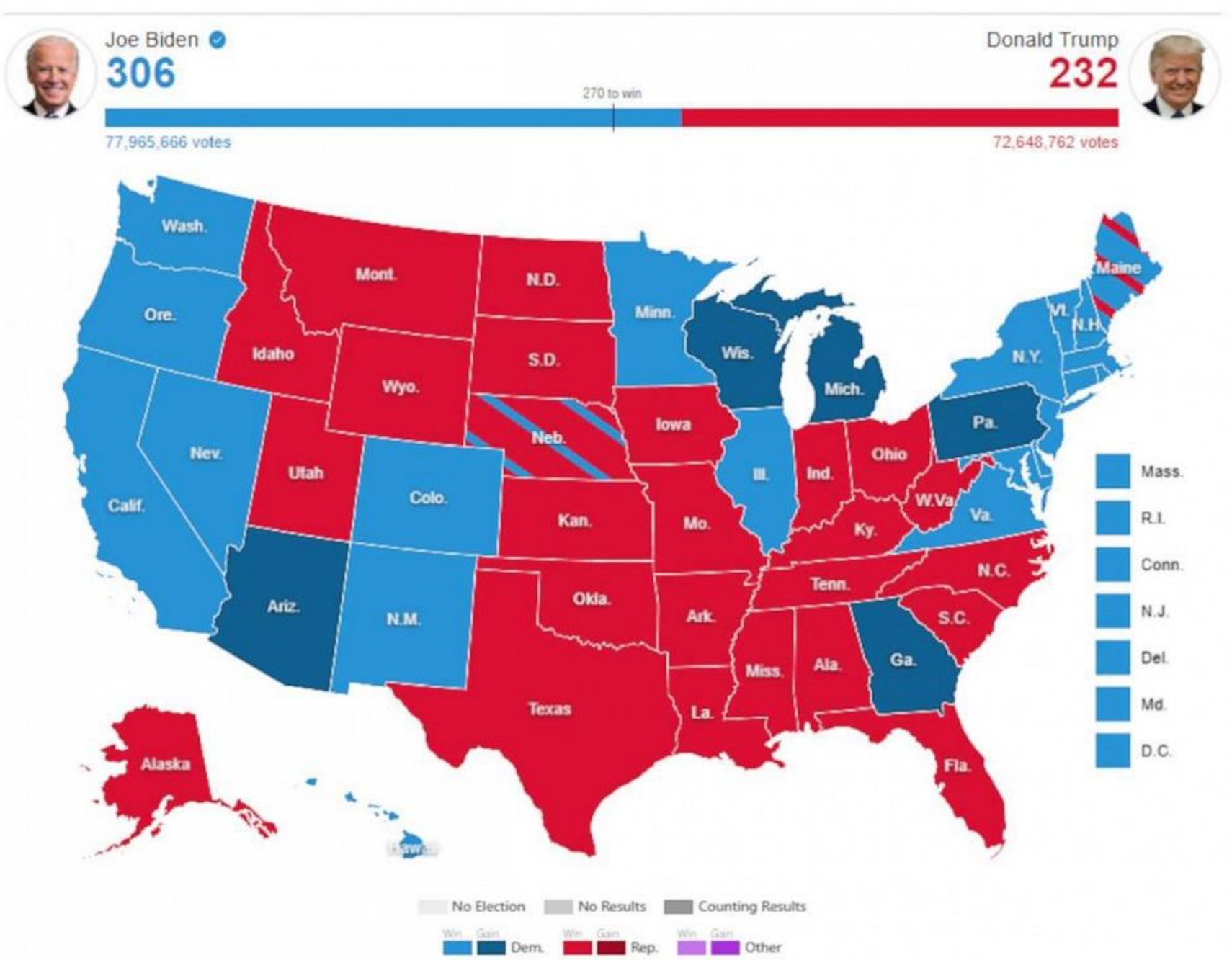
Union Membership

2020

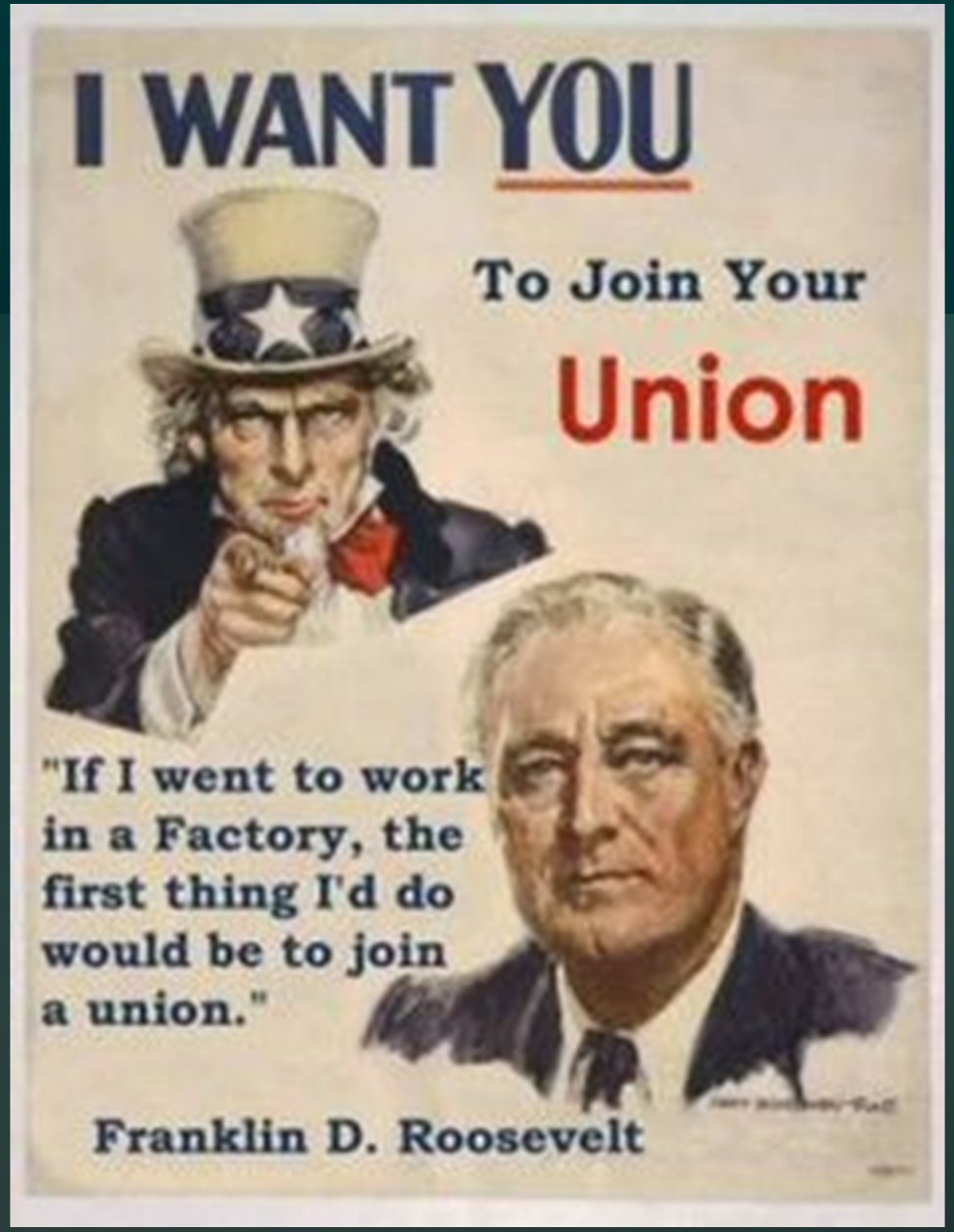
Union Membership in 2020

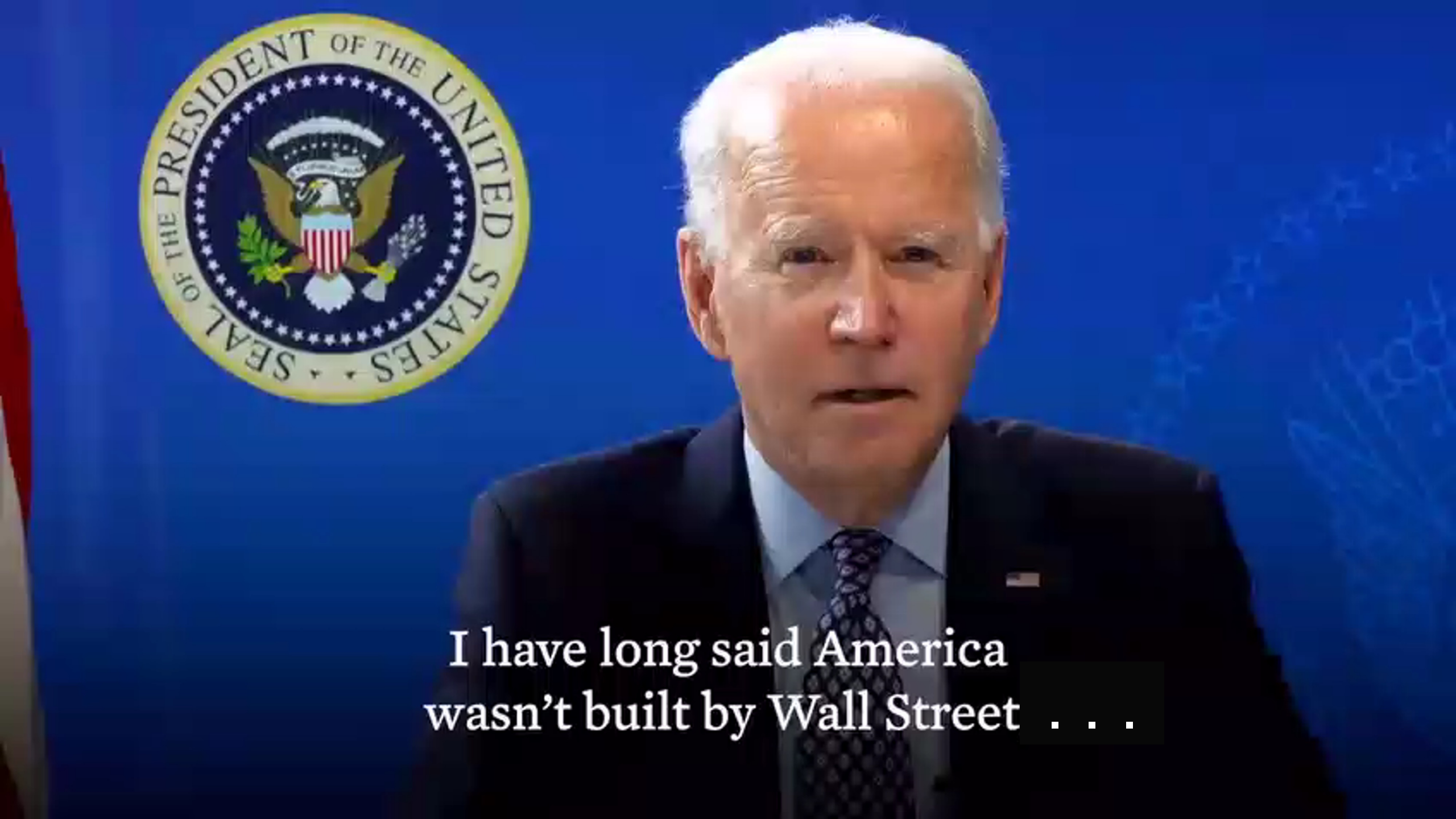


2020 Election Results



Counties are colored red or blue when the % expected vote reporting reaches a set threshold. This threshold varies by state and is based on patterns of past vote reporting and expectations about how the vote will report this year.


I WANT YOU
To Join Your
Union
"If I went to work in a Factory, the first thing I'd do would be to join a union."
Franklin D. Roosevelt


SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
I have long said America
wasn't built by Wall Street . . .

How do we shift the balance of power?

UNION
YES
Walmart

NOT OK
GOOGLE
#DONTBEEVIL

McDonald's
BILLIONS AND BILLIONS SERVED
MCDONALD'S:
PROTEGE A TODOS
LOS TRABAJADORES
NO TU LINEA
DE FONDO

amazon
VOTE
UNION
YES
RWDSU
The Union's
On Your Side

77%

Support bargaining collectively

Morning Consult Poll
April 2020

Expand voting rights

Derig the rules

Pass the PRO Act

WHY UNIONS MATTER

"We are not spectators to history.

WE ARE ITS MAKERS."

IATSE President Matthew D. Loeb