



Unions in Tough Times:

Preserving our Space, Building our Power

Jim Stanford, CAW Economist

stanford@caw.ca

Sefton Lecture, University of Toronto, March 2008

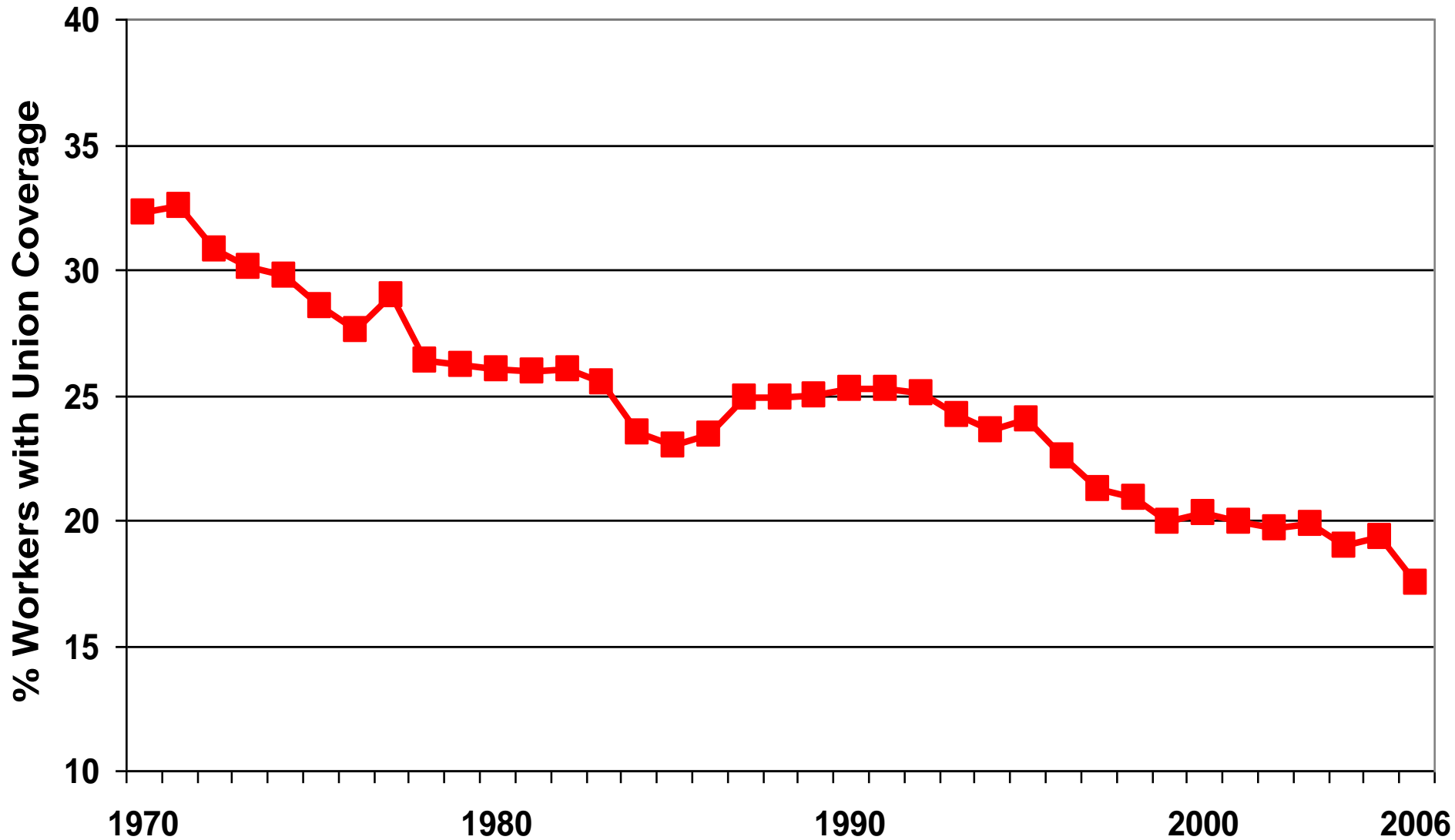






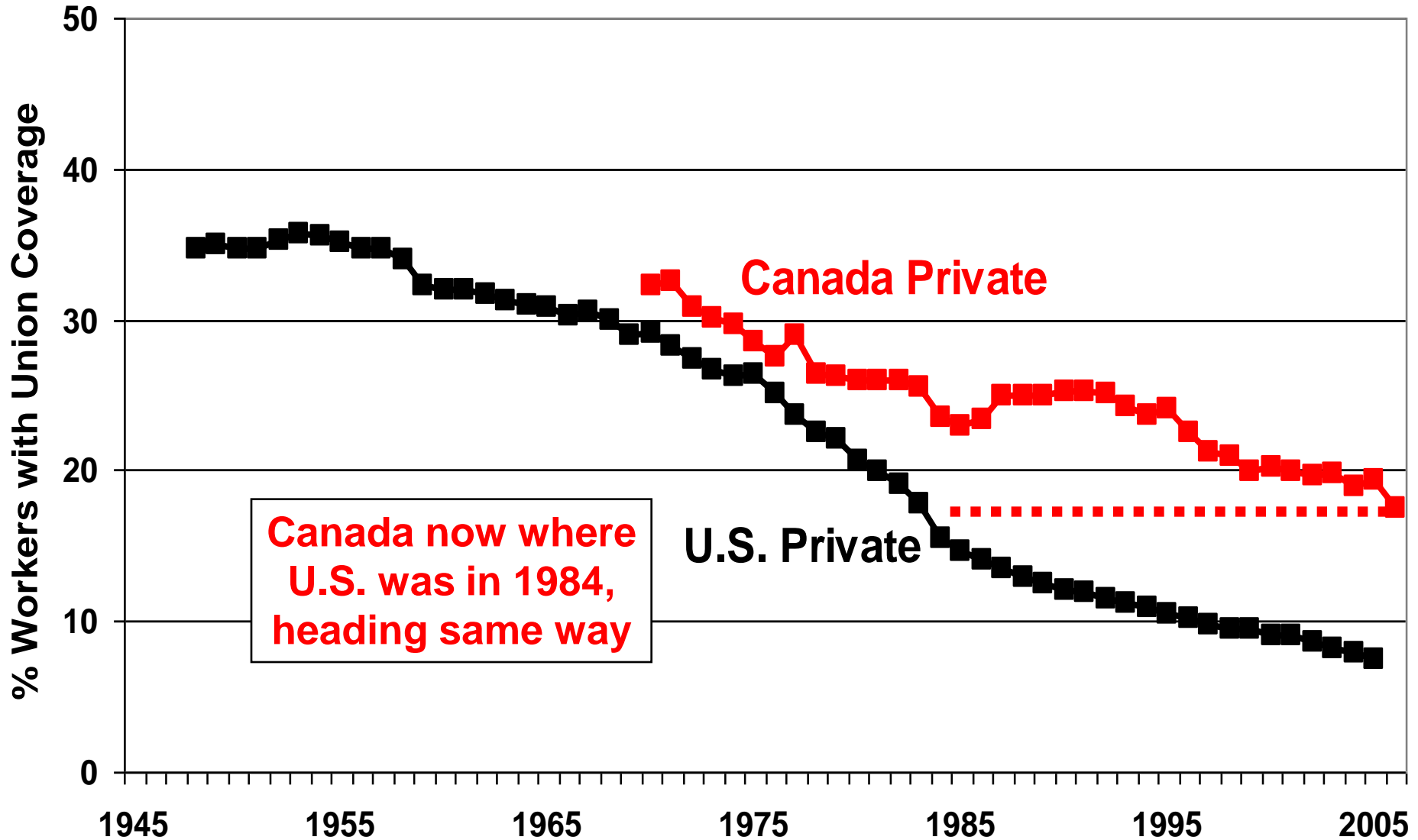
Union Density:

Canada, Private Sector



Union Density

Canada vs. U.S.

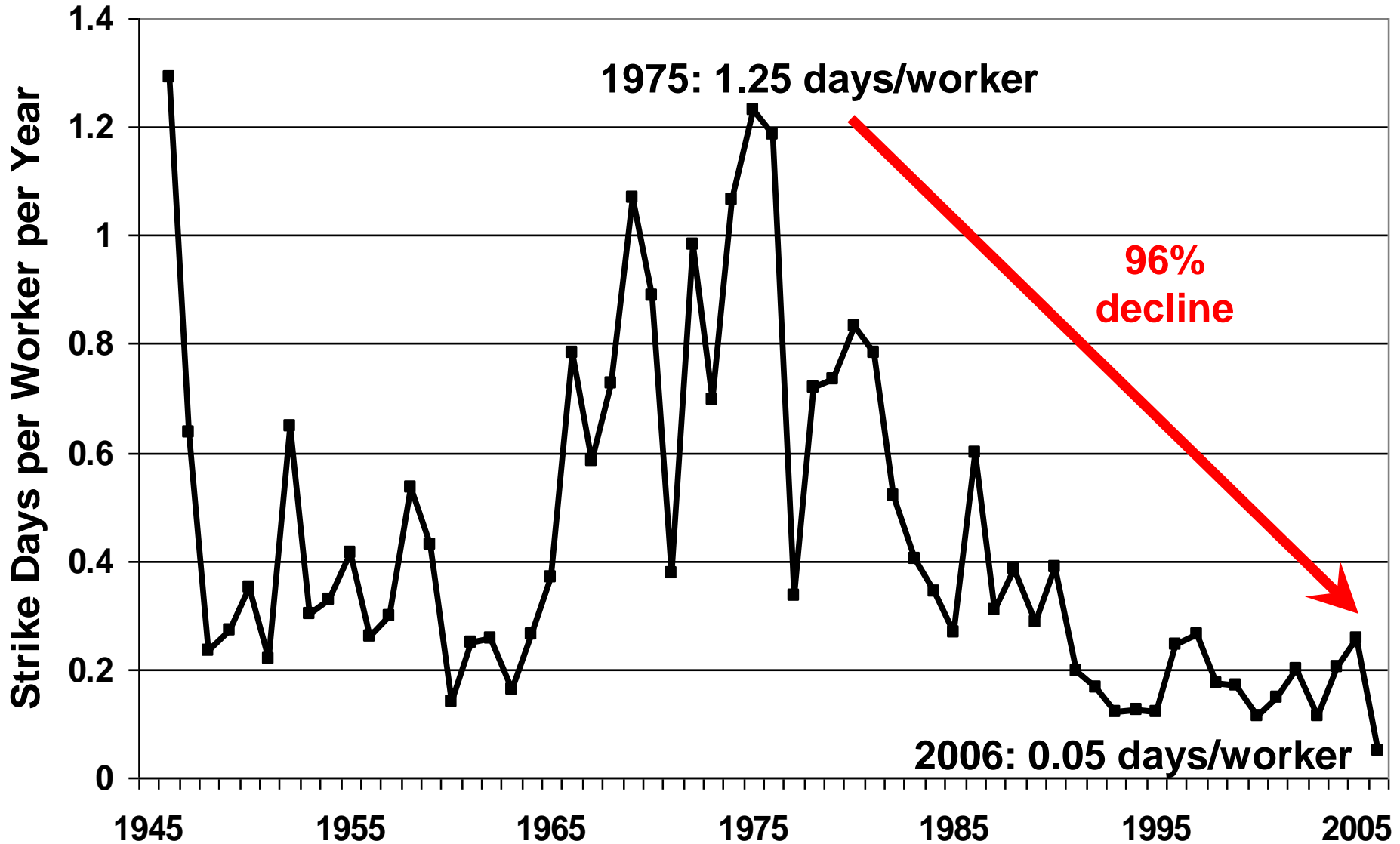


Canada now where
U.S. was in 1984,
heading same way

U.S. Private

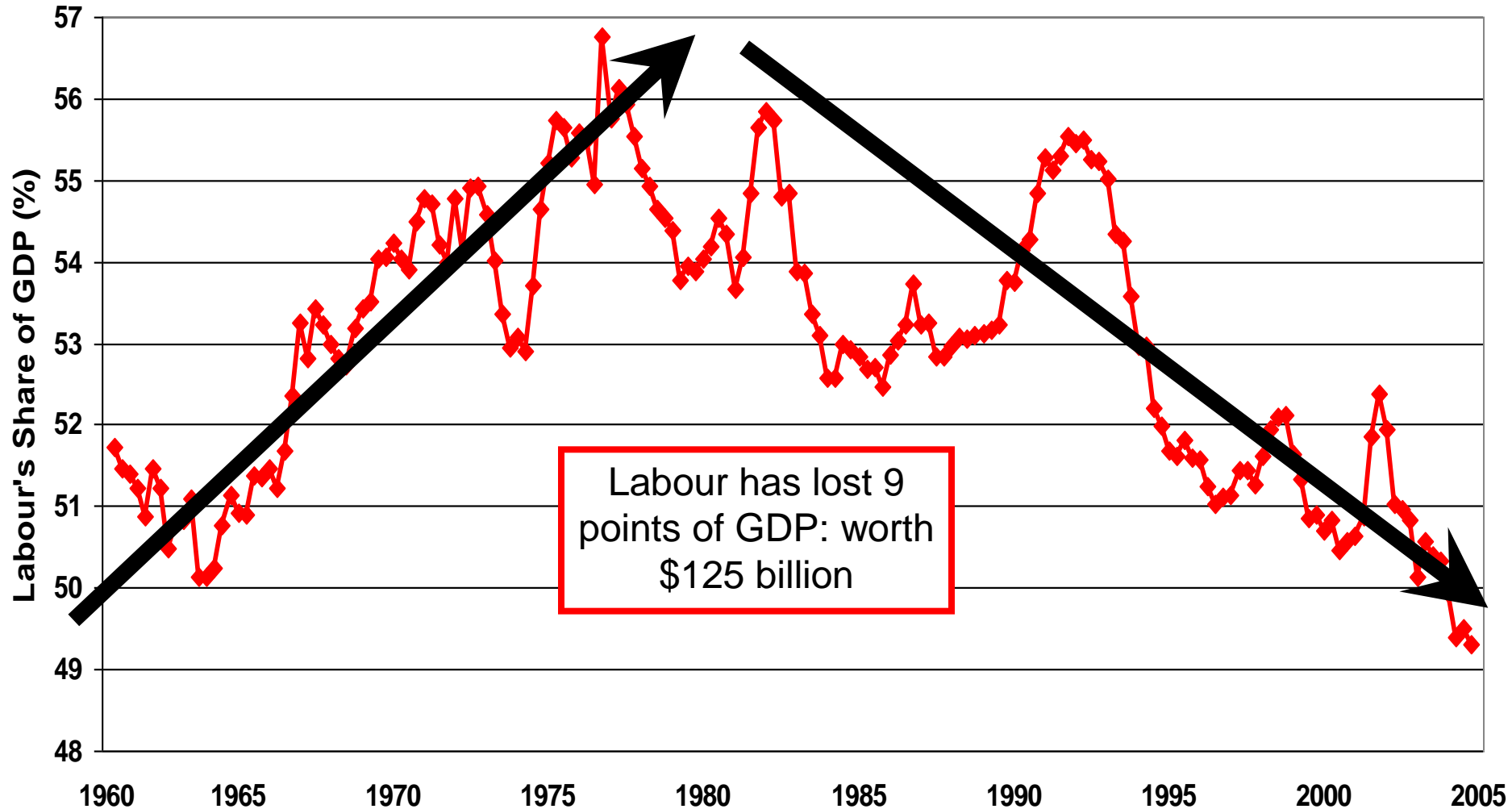
Canada Private

Strike Frequency



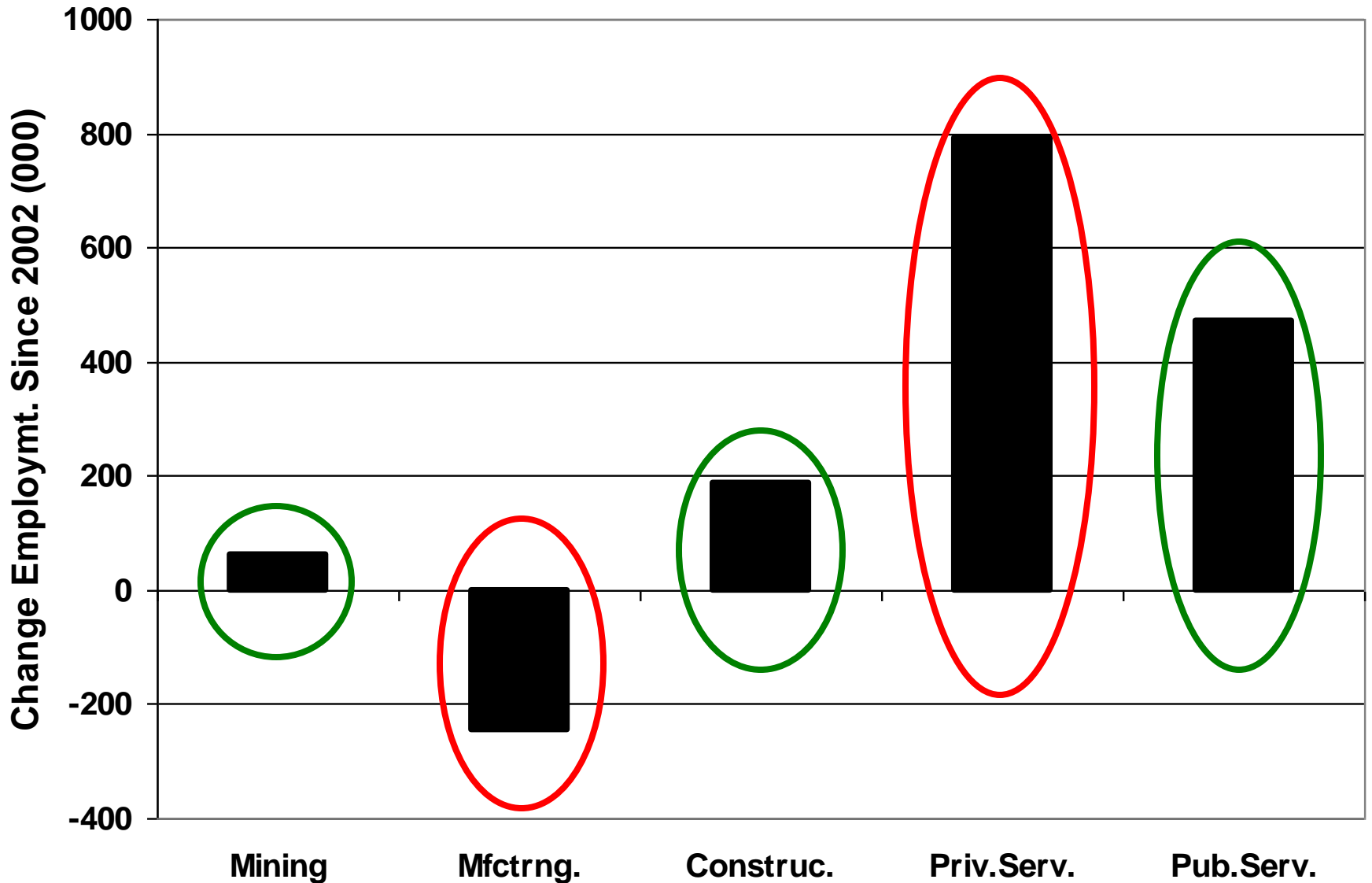
Without a union, you can't go on strike.

Labour Share of GDP



Without a union, your share of the pie will shrink.

Canada's Shifting Sectoral Makeup





**Preserve viability
of employer, jobs**

- *Intensity of competition*
- *Globalization*
- *Sophistication of resistance*

Make progress for members

Why Density Matters

- **Micro: union power depends on having a critical mass in each industry**
 - In danger of losing that with growth of leading non-union firms (Magna, Toyota, Dofasco, WestJet, WalMart)
- **Macro: the entire direction of society depends on union movement having critical mass**
 - Income distribution
 - Social policies
 - Progressive politics

Responses to Declining Union Density

1. **Try harder** ✓
2. **Work to change labour law** ✓
3. **Work to change economic policy, create more “good” jobs** ✓
4. **Try alternative approaches** ✓
 - *Voluntary recognition*
 - *Community campaigns*
 - *Innovative forms (eg. minority/individual)*
 - *Sector-wide strategies*
 - *Strategy for private service sector*
 - *Cost sharing*

Unanswered Questions from “The Great Magna Debate”

- Who else has done this, and what has been the experience?
- What are the legal issues of no-strike clauses?
- What will be the impact of having a “real union” in a “participatory” workplace?
- What is the labour movement’s overall strategy to deal with falling density?

Voluntary Recognition

- Sophisticated union avoidance strategies defeat most organizing drives
- Removing that resistance makes the difference
 - Freightliner
 - Dana
- But voluntary recognition must be negotiated
 - Use your initial power to get employer's attention
 - Leverage, negotiate to win something bigger
 - All negotiations involve give and take

8 Standard Features

1. Magna employees vote to join (no intimidation).
2. CAW recognized as bargaining agent.
3. Collective agreement with all the features.
4. Full union dues.
5. Contract enforced through dispute settlement with binding arbitration.
6. Members represented by full-time local representatives.
7. Members serviced by national reps, full access to all national resources and services.
8. Contract renegotiated every three years; changes ratified by secret ballot.

4 Unique Features

1. Concern Resolution Process: Binding arbitration is last resort.
2. Local representatives (“Employee Advocates”) elected/ratified by an indirect process.
3. Local structures of workplace democracy, including a Fairness Committee at each Magna plant (with the workers holding a 50%+1 majority) and referendums.
4. Contract disputes settled by final-offer arbitration; no strikes ***or lockouts***.