Unions in Tough Times:

Preserving our Space,
Building our Power

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Union Density

Canada vs. U.S.

% Workers with Union Coverage

Canada now where U.S. was in 1984, heading same way
Without a union, you can't go on strike.
Labour has lost 9 points of GDP: worth $125 billion.

Without a union, your share of the pie will shrink.
Make progress for members

Preserve viability of employer, jobs

• Intensity of competition
• Globalization
• Sophistication of resistance
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.