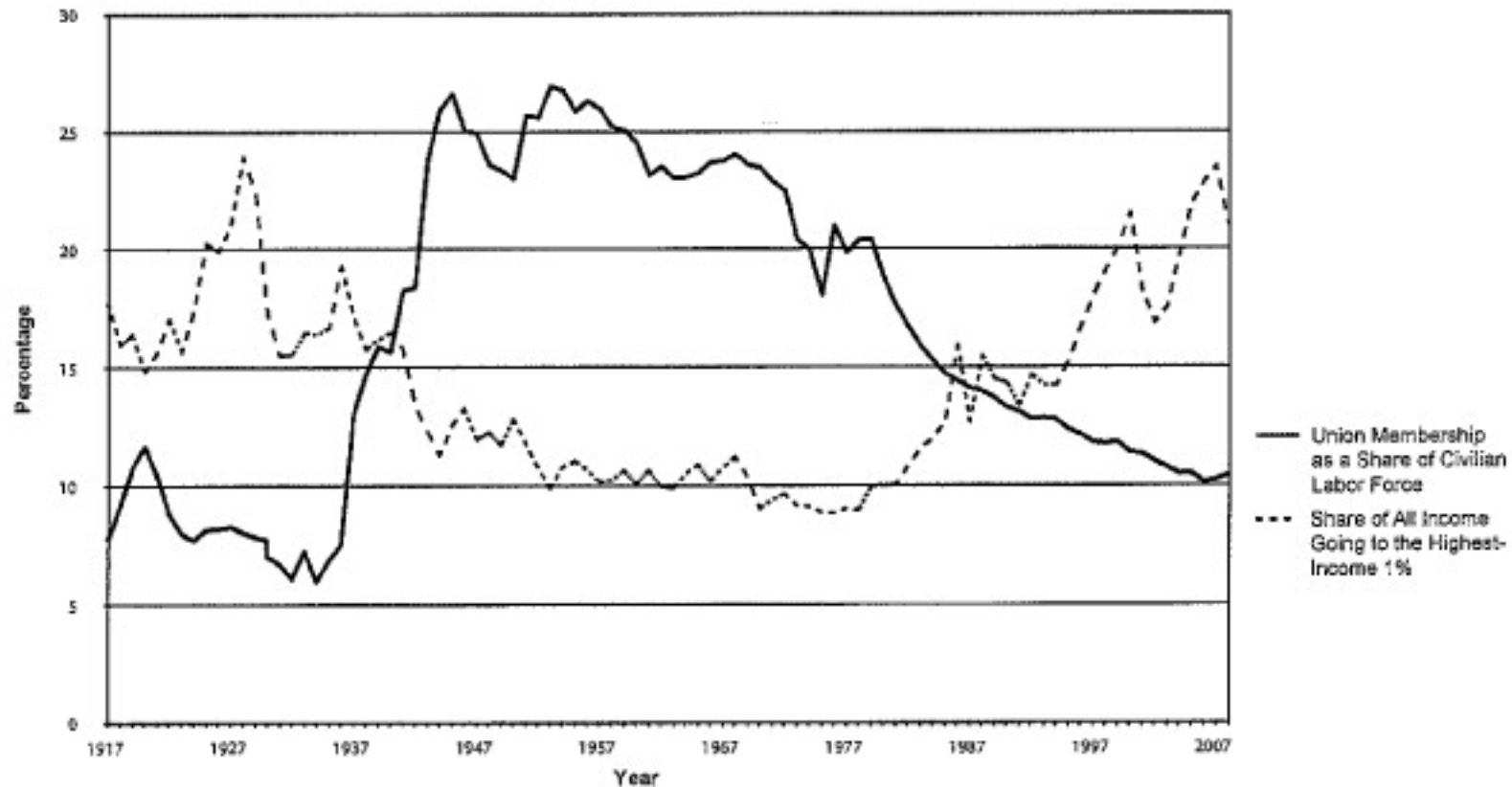


Why unions matter to all of us

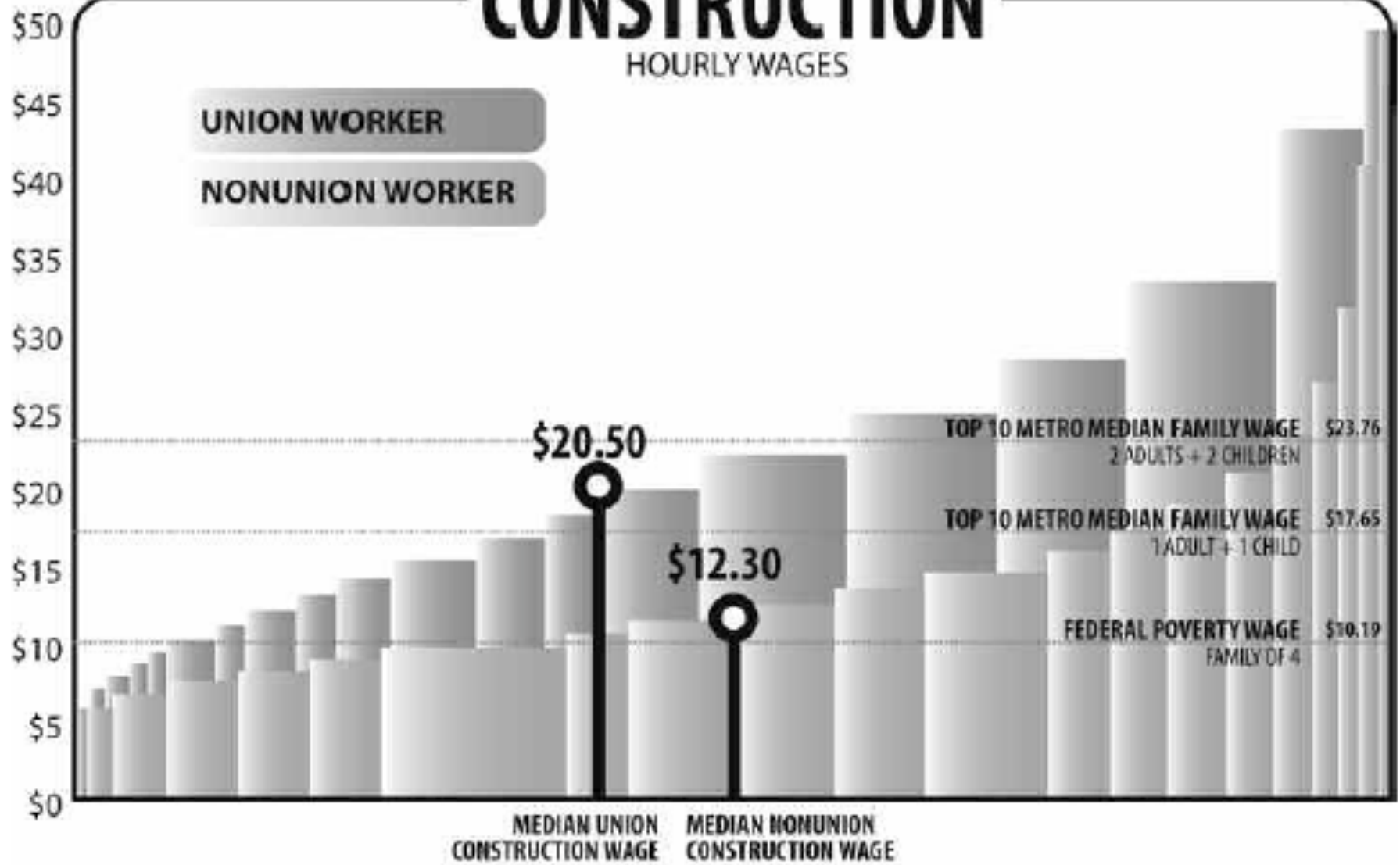
Figure 10.1 Union Membership and Income Inequality, 1917–2008



Sources: Civilian Labor Force: post-1970, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (SAUS), various years; pre-1971, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (HSUS), D4 and D14. Union Membership: post-1970, SAUS, various years; unreported years, G. Mayer, "Union Membership Trends in the United States," Congressional Research Service, 8-31-2004, online at digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1176&context=key_workplace; 1930-1970, HSUS, D948; 1917 to 1930, L. Troy and N. Sheflin, *U.S. Union Sourcebook*, 1st Edition, W. Orange, NJ: Industrial Relations Data and Information Services, 1985, Table A1. Income data: see Figure 1.

Note: Data for 1917 to 1930 and data from 1930 to 2008 are from different sources and are not fully compatible. A union membership figure for 1982 could not be obtained; the number there has been taken as halfway between the 1981 and 1983 figures.

BASIC TRADES
CONSTRUCTION
HOURLY WAGES









Construction Trades

- Democratic organizations responsible for welfare of their members
- Complex ecosystem
 - Multiple trades
 - Signatory contractors
 - Owners
- Cut-throat, low-bid construction industry

Understanding Laborers

- Of the Trades... but
- Diverse membership
- Diverse skill set

What does it mean for our members?

- Green building?
 - Some new skills, new work (e.g. decon)
 - But not really about workers
- Clean energy?
 - Pipeline: Oil vs. Gas
 - Renewable vs. conventional
- Smart growth?
 - Highway vs. transit
 - Repair vs. new construction
- Sustainability?
 - Green infrastructure
 - Water conservation

What does it mean for our members?

- Construction is a cut-throat, low-bid industry
- The social compact has fallen apart
- As a result
 - Change could be our friend, but often isn't
 - Decentralization, devolution, disaggregation make our work much harder

Austin, Texas

- Unofficial motto is Keep Austin Weird
- Have own version of LEED (they were first!)
- Committed to green building, green space, smart growth, you name it...
- Among top urban infill construction markets

Austin, Texas

Workers Defense Project survey:

- Half earn poverty level wages (\$10/hour)
- 1 in 5 are victims of wage theft, over 1/3 misclassified
- 3 in 4 lack health coverage, sick or vacation days
- 1 in 5 has been injured, 2/3 get no safety training
- Three workers died in single accident after publication
“If a firefighter or a cop gets killed in the line of duty, his family is almost fed for life. If a construction worker gets killed on a construction site, he’s lucky if they even put a ribbon on a cone for him.”

Washington DC

- Urban infill, bike lanes,
- Among hottest construction markets
- Among most expensive places to live

Washington DC

- Average wage for laborer is under \$15
- A quarter earn less than \$12
- Yet DC residents can't get on a job
- Less than 20% of construction jobs go to city residents

Why should you care?

- A sustainable world requires strong unions
- Unions play a key political role
- A skilled construction workforce is needed for execution

Help us help you

- Equity and economic sustainability needs to be part of program and that should extend to construction workers
- We need your help defining smart growth and its impacts on us
- We need your help establishing policies and standards that ensure good union job creation