

**New Horizons  
Foundation  
SMWIA Merger Project**

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April 1, 2006

# The Fundamental Problem

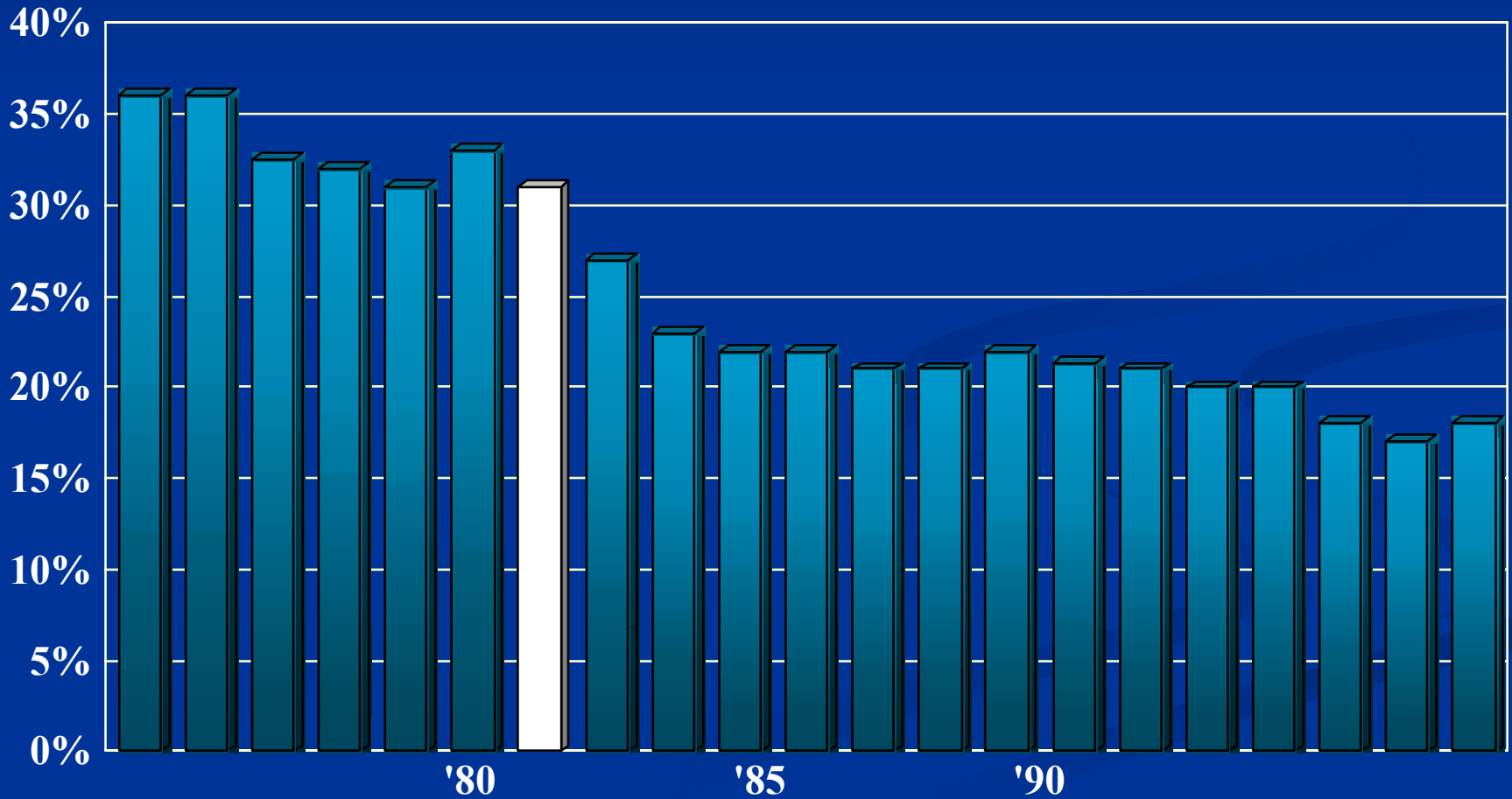
Declining union density in the construction industry has . . .

- Weakened the bargaining strength of unions
- Eroded political influence
- Diminished union resources
- Lessened capacity to confront problems

Thus, mergers are a potential, but only partial, solution to these problems for unions

# Declining Union Density

## National Construction Union Density



# Building Trades Membership, 2005



# My Methodology

Analyze data on union density

Collect materials on strategies of . . .

- Change to Win
- Carpenters
- AFL-CIO
- National Construction Alliance

Conduct interviews with knowledgeable individuals

# Interviews

## SMACNA

- National Officers
- Chapter executives
- Contractors

## SMWIA

- Leadership
- Business Managers

Building Trades Union National Leaders

# WHY: '6' Forces to Merger

1. Failure to (re) organize markets
2. Organization and success of nonunion construction
3. Threat of the “Carpenters Model”
4. Change to Win Federation
5. AFL-CIO Mergers resolution
6. Inability of smaller trades to continue to offer current level of services to members

# Change to Win Federation

Seven unions: Teamsters, Laborers, UNITE-HERE, SEIU, Food and Commercial Workers, Carpenters, Farm Workers

A Principal Goal: “To actively support mergers that unite workers by industry”

- To build collective bargaining power
- Before it is too late to make a difference



# AFL-CIO

In response to Change To Win, Resolution #59  
“AFL-CIO Policy on Encouraging National  
Union Mergers”

Key policy action – a Blue Ribbon Panel on  
Strategic Mergers

- Evaluate overlapping jurisdictions
- Stimulate consideration of appropriate mergers
- Issue a set of recommendations

# National Construction Alliance

- Announced February 2006
- Laborers, Operating Engineers, Carpenters, Bricklayers, Iron Workers, Teamsters

# MERGER: WHY?

Increased size = increased power

- Organizing new members
- Bargaining leverage
- Union power = Unionized Contractor power?
- Power within the broader labor movement

Organizational efficiencies, including apprenticeship

Benefit fund efficiencies

Match greater workplace efficiencies of nonunion construction

Because most believe that other trades are going to merge, and thus consolidation is now inevitable

# MERGER: Barriers

1. Denial of reality, lack of sense of crisis
2. Organizational political barriers
3. Local resistance from strong markets
4. Pride of craft, tradition, and name
5. Lack of push from the top of the labor movement
6. SMWIA / SMACNA relationship – too positive to let go