

<b>Title</b>	<b>The Future of Private Sector Unionism in the United States</b>
Author	James T. Bennett and Bruce E. Kaufman
Source	M.E. Sharpe
Pub Date	2002
Brief Introduction	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Series Editor's Foreword</b></p> <p>The proportion of the American work force represented by unions has fallen dramatically since its peak in the 1950s. This drop has been centered in the private sector. Why has the decline occurred? Is it likely to continue? Is there something unions can do to arrest and reverse the decline? What consequences will the union decline have for the employment relationship if it continues? What role might public policy toward labor relations have in affecting the union representation trend? These are the questions addressed by the various authors in this volume in M.E. Sharpe's Issues in Work and Human Resources series.</p> <p>As volume editor Bruce E. Kaufman points out, much of the current literature on union representation trends was prefigured in a famous (or infamous) December 1932 address by then president of the American Economic Association, George Barnett. In that speech, Barnett incorrectly predicted further union decline, just at the moment when unionization was poised to expand rapidly. The Great Depression, with its dramatic economic and political consequences, quickly invalidated his 1932 prediction. Later, World War II, another dramatic and unforeseen event, reinforced the depression-era gains made by unions. Barnett's 1932 false prediction has induced some contemporary authors to point to the essential difficulty posed to forecasters by nonlinear events such as the depression.</p> <p>There is a difference, however, between forecasting today and forecasting in late 1932. In 1932, the depression was already apparent. Indeed, at the time of Barnett's address, Franklin Roosevelt had already been elected (although he had not yet taken office), banks were failing, and mass unemployment was rampant. Perhaps a wiser forecaster would have foreseen that the range of uncertainty was much wider than it had</p> <p>been a few years before and that special caution was warranted. At the writing of this volume, however, no evident calamity has occurred or is apparent. Thus, the kind of prognostication and research represented in its pages demand careful attention from all those interested in labor relations, employee representation at the workplace, and the general course of public policy toward collective bargaining and other employment concerns.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Daniel J.B. Mitchell</p>