

Little Ant and the Power of Many

By Jason McDonnell



Illustrations by Elaine Willcock

This is the second book of a two-book story, about an ant named Little Ant.

In this book, Little Ant learns about bargaining, solidarity and what it's like being on a strike line.

Be sure to check out the glossary at the back of the book for definitions of the words used in this book.

Thank you to everyone involved in the USW Family & Community Education Fund for giving me the opportunity to write these kids' stories.

In solidarity,
Jason McDonnell
USW Local 2918

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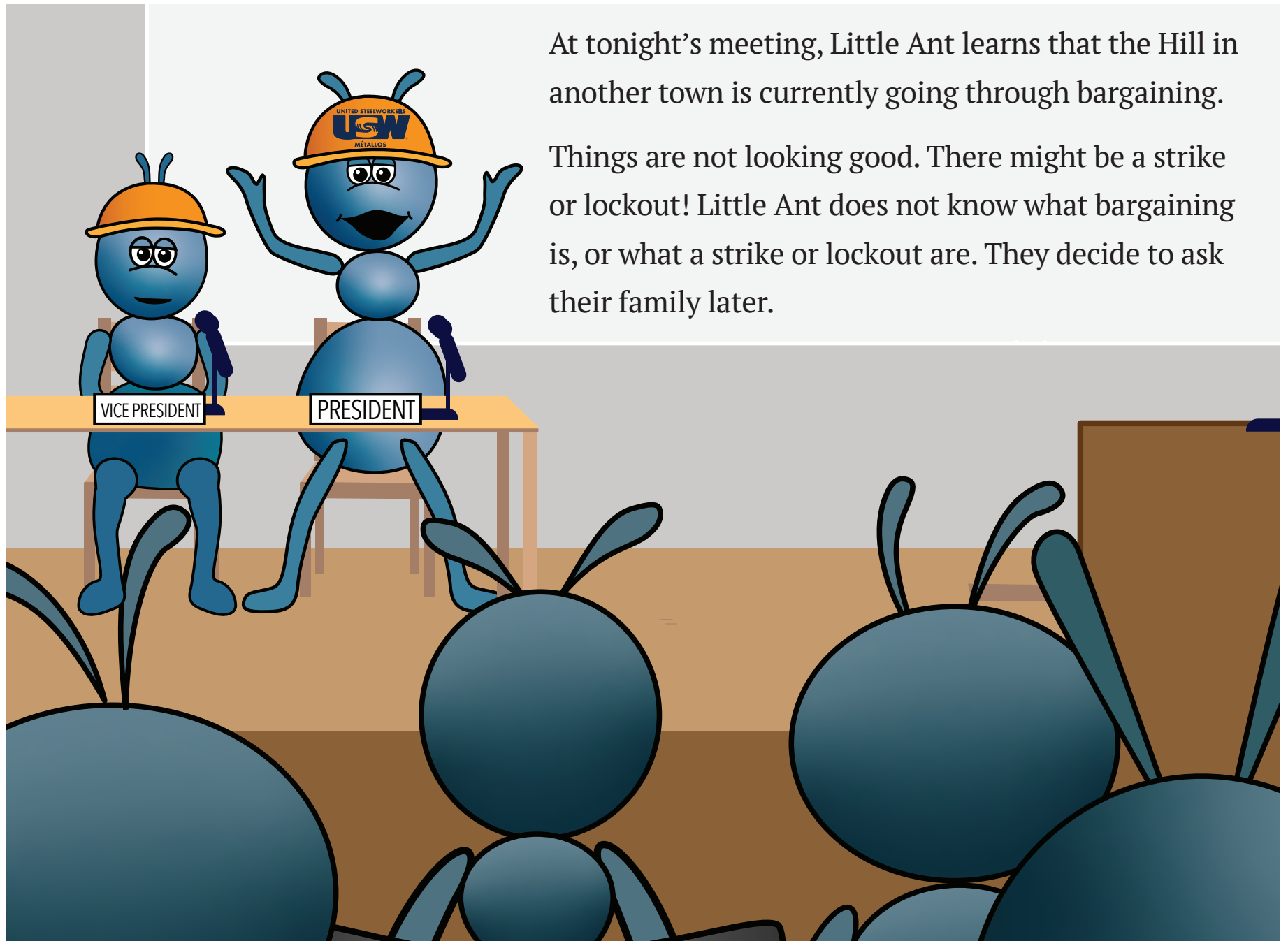


Little Ant has been working at the Hill near their house for a few months. They really like their job!
They are starting to get more involved with the local union at the Hill.





Little Ant has been going to union meetings with their dad and sister.

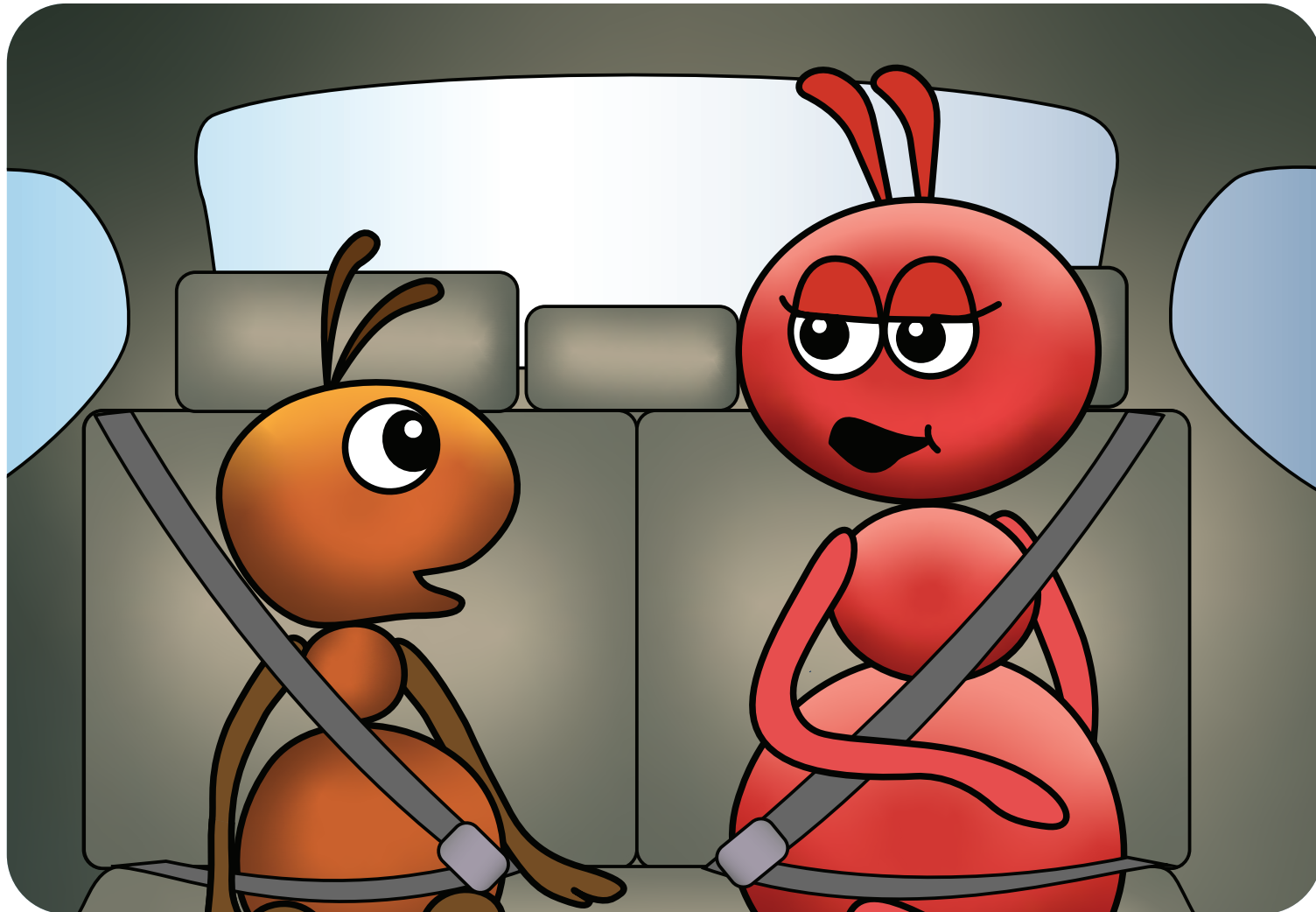


At tonight's meeting, Little Ant learns that the Hill in another town is currently going through bargaining.

Things are not looking good. There might be a strike or lockout! Little Ant does not know what bargaining is, or what a strike or lockout are. They decide to ask their family later.

On the way home from the union meeting, Little Ant's sister tells them that the Hill they were talking about is the Hill where their cousins work.

Little Ant feels sad that this is happening to their cousins.





At home, Little Ant asks their dad what bargaining is, and what a strike and lockout are. Their dad tells them that bargaining is something that happens every few years.

“It is when the union and company get together to go over the work agreement they have and try to make a new agreement that makes working at the Hill even better.”

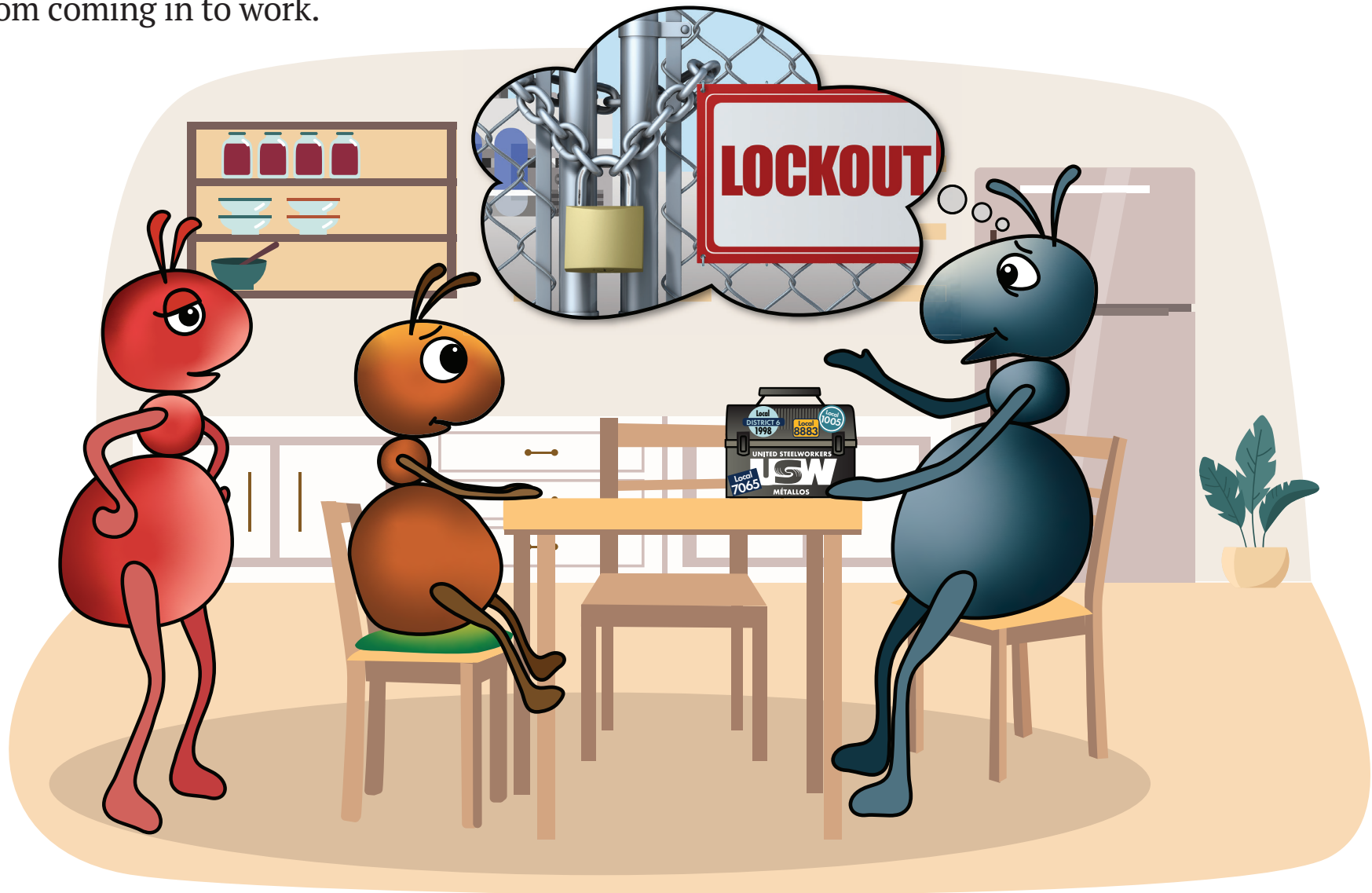
Dad tells Little Ant that a strike is something that can happen when the union doesn't agree to what the company offers.

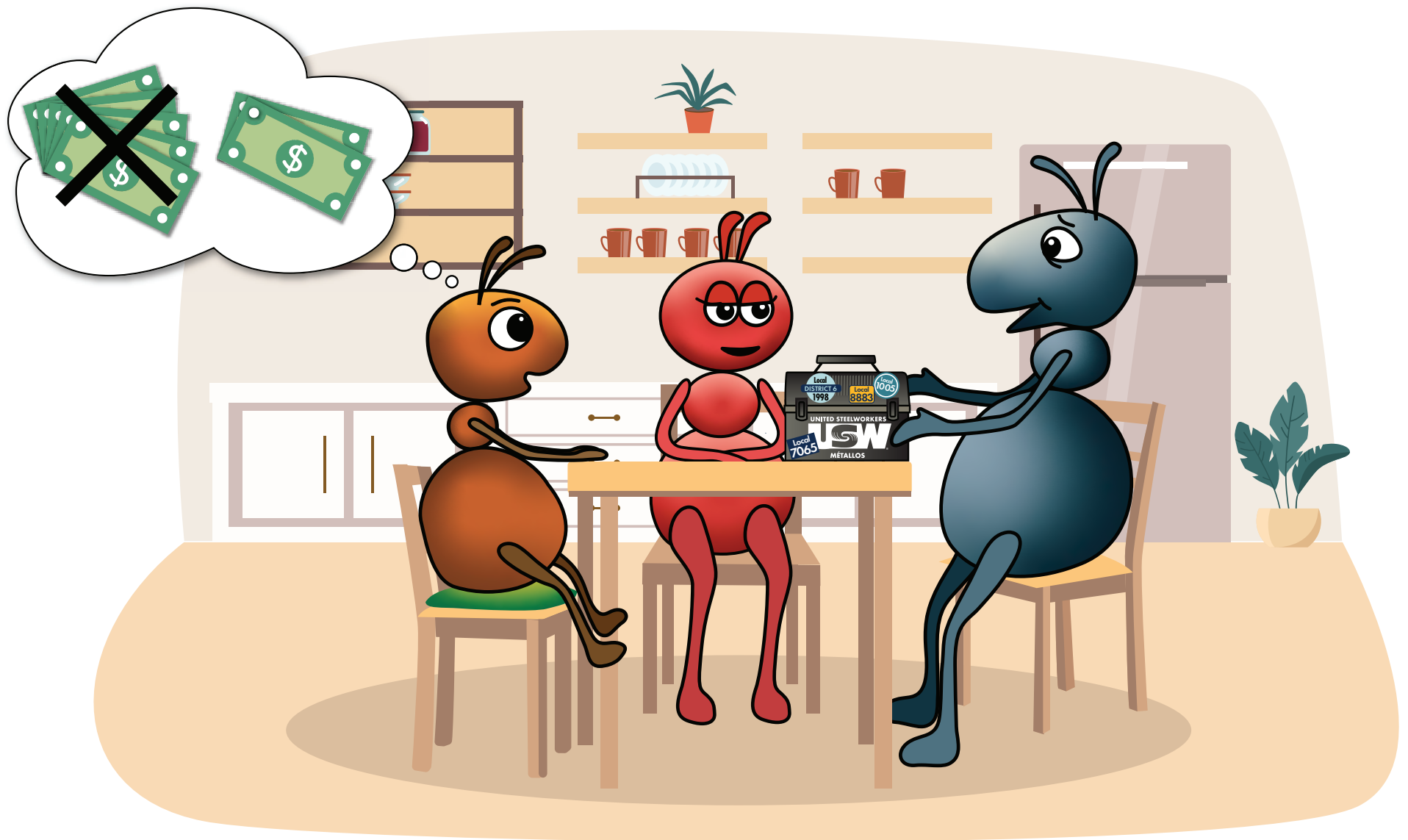


The union's members vote 'yes' or 'no' to the company's offer. If they vote 'yes,' then they keep working. But, if they vote 'no,' they stop working until a new, better agreement is offered.

He then tells Little Ant that a lockout is different. It is when the company doesn't agree with what the union offers.

This means the company stops the union's workers from working and locks the door to stop them from coming in to work.



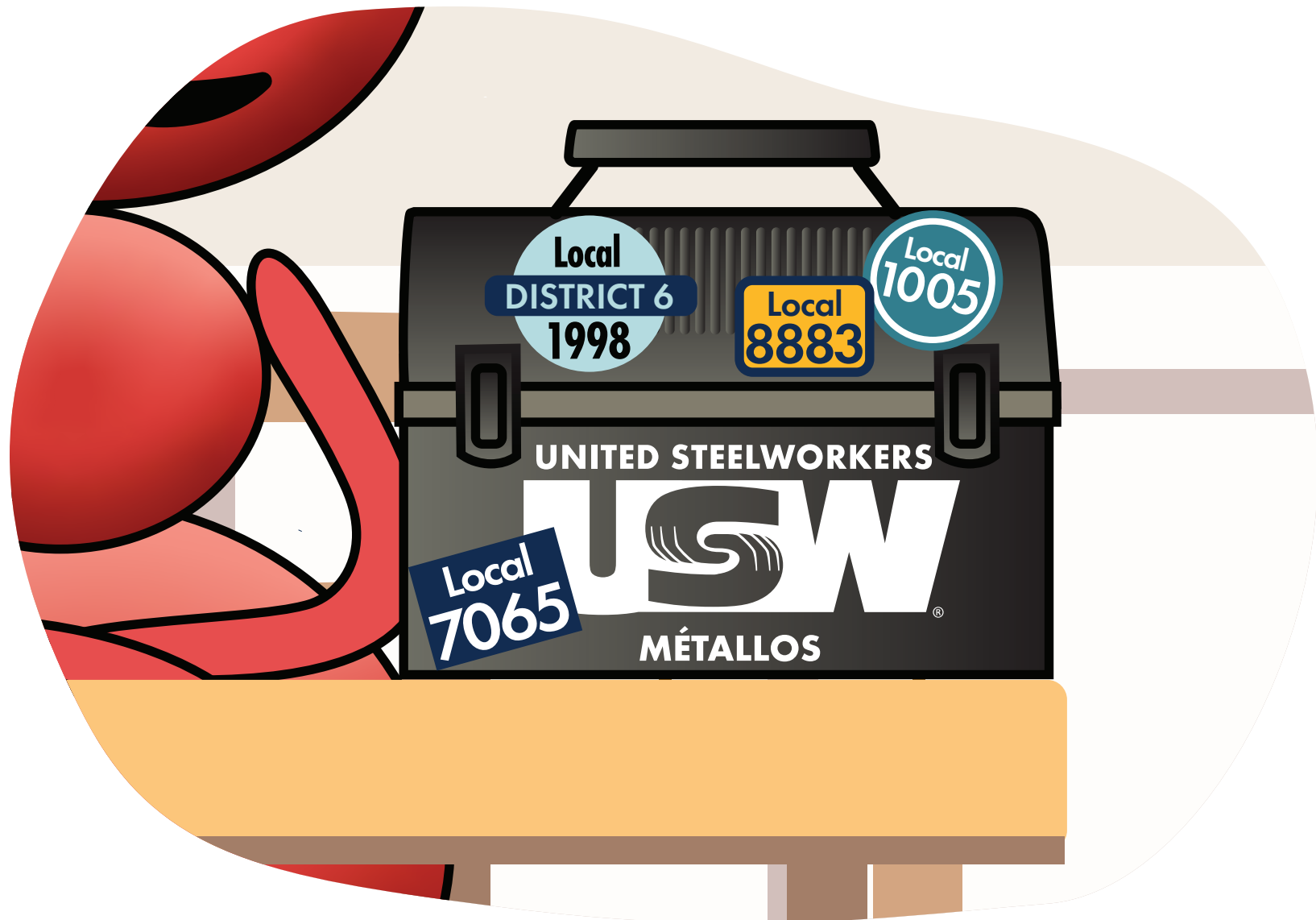


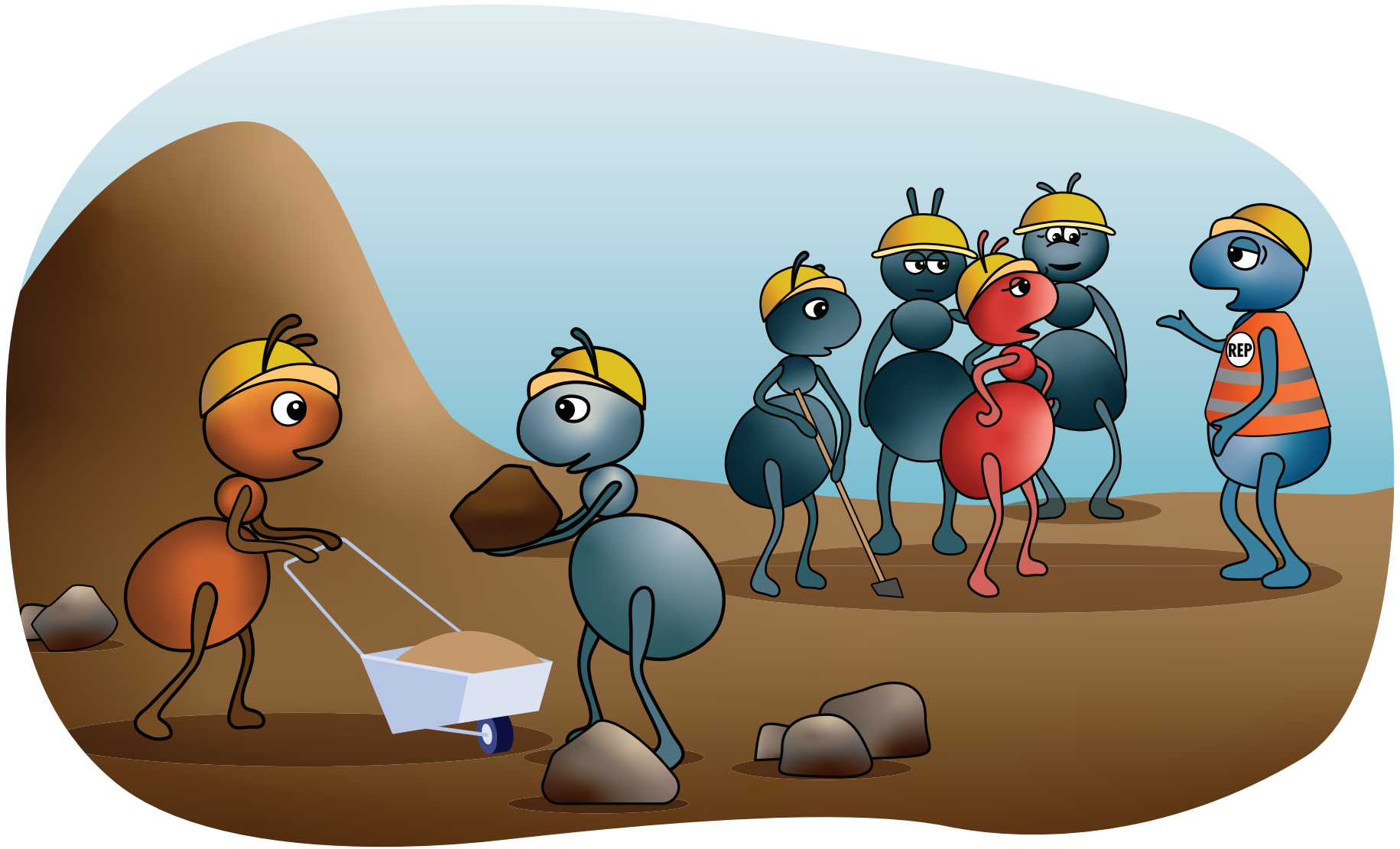
Little Ant asks their dad what it means that the President said bargaining is not going well. “Why is he telling us about a Hill that’s two towns away?”

Their dad tells them that it could mean a lot of things. “The company may want to pay the workers less money or make their jobs less safe. Or, they may not be talking to them at all.”

Little Ant's dad tells them that the local is telling us because we are all in the same union.

“We might have a different local number, but at the end of the day, we are all Steelworkers.”





A few days later, Little Ant is at the Hill working. They learn that the Hill two towns over didn't say yes to their new working agreement.

Now, the company won't let the ants at their cousins' Hill go to work.

To show support for these locked-out ants, there will be a big gathering of workers from far and wide. Little Ant and their sister call their cousins and tell them they'll see them at the gathering this weekend.



That weekend, Little Ant heads to the Hill two towns over with their sister and dad. Other workers from their local are also going.



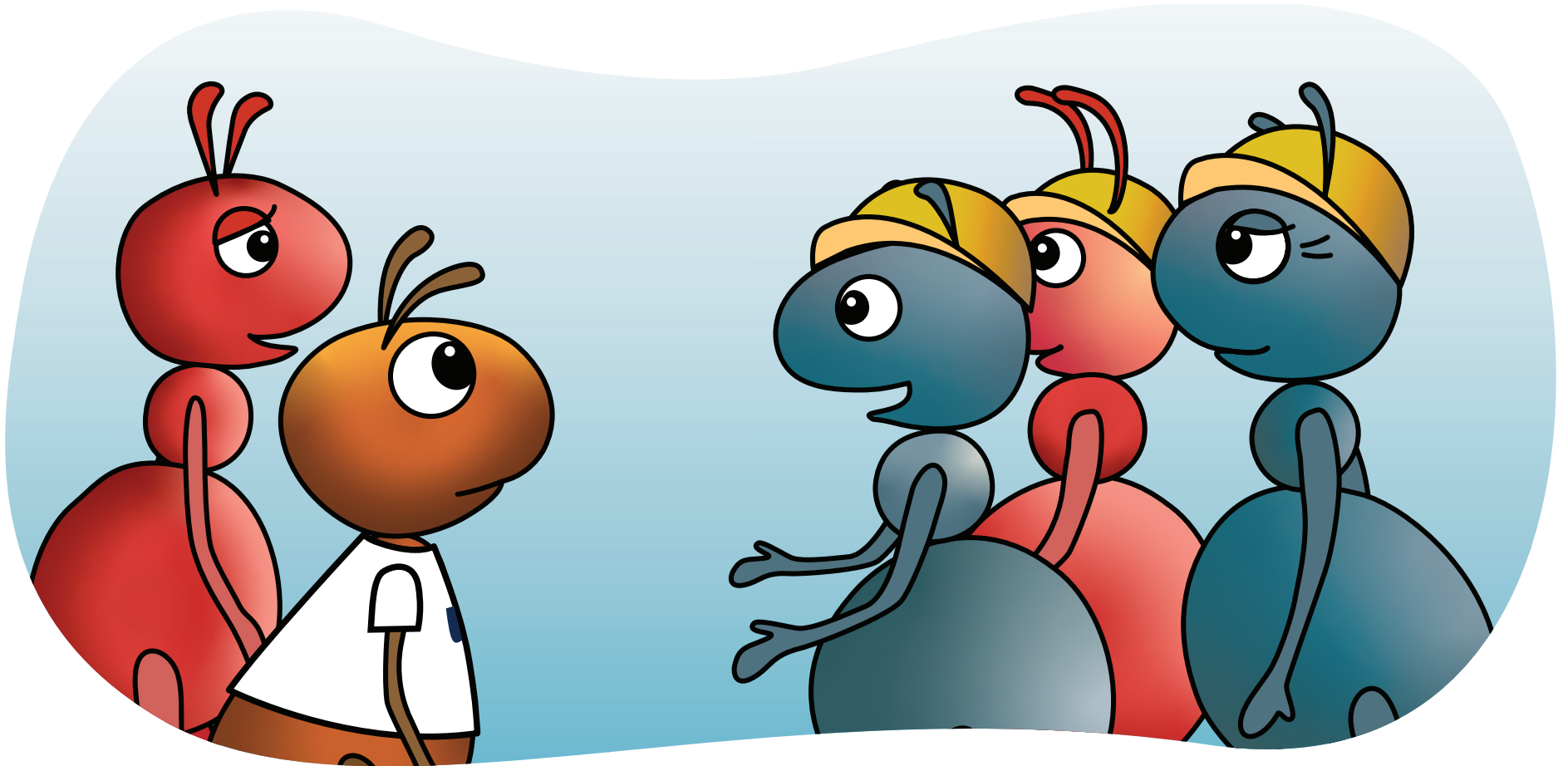
Little Ant's bus pulls up at their cousins' Hill. They hear loud cheers and see lots of buses filled with worker ants from other locals.

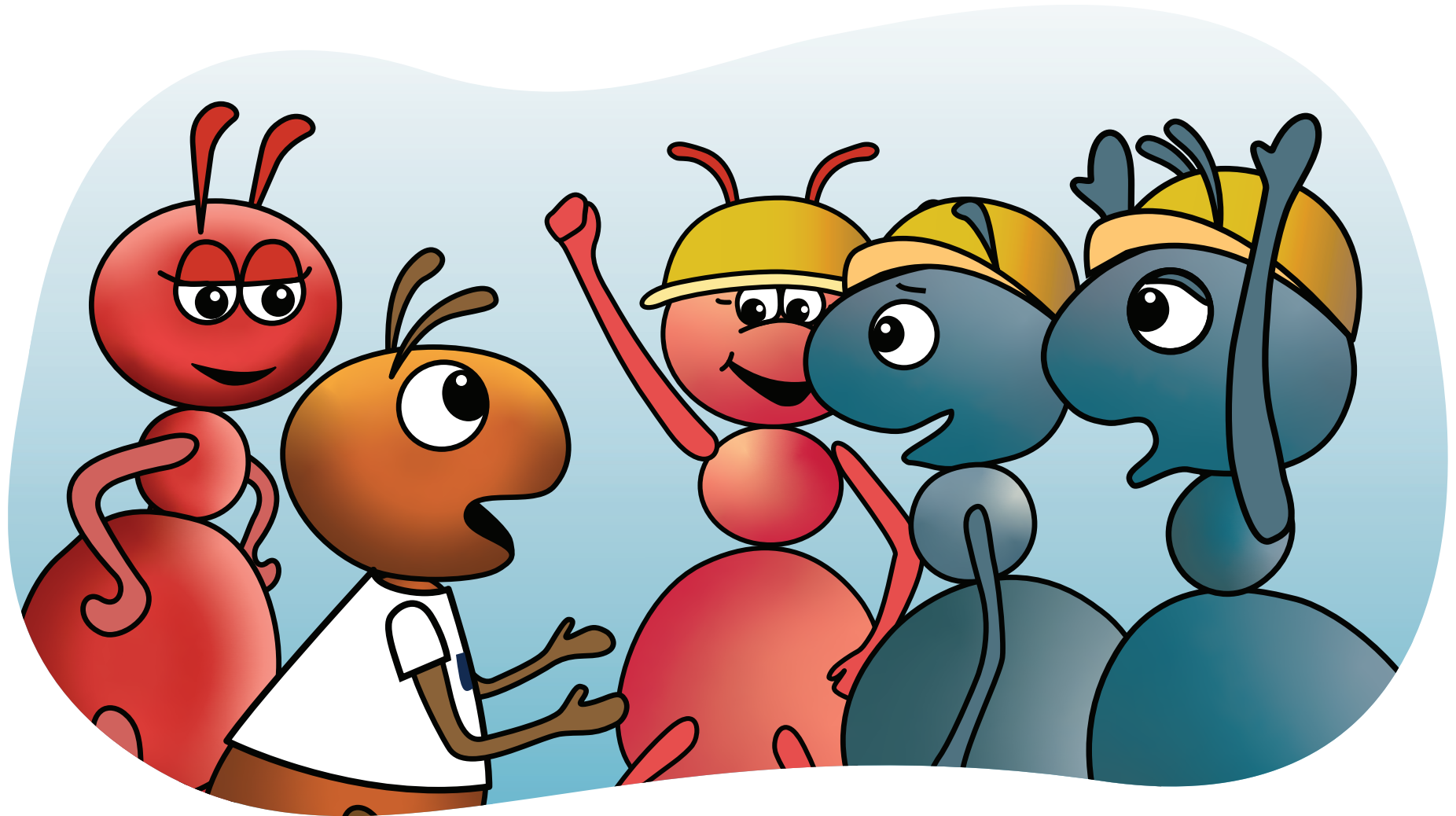
There is a sea of union flags and ants wearing USW shirts. They are all there to support the workers at the Hill!



Little Ant meets up with their cousins and asks them what is going on.

Their cousins tell them that the company wants to pay the Hill's new worker ants less money than others. And, they want to stop paying for their medicines and not give them pensions! There are other issues too.



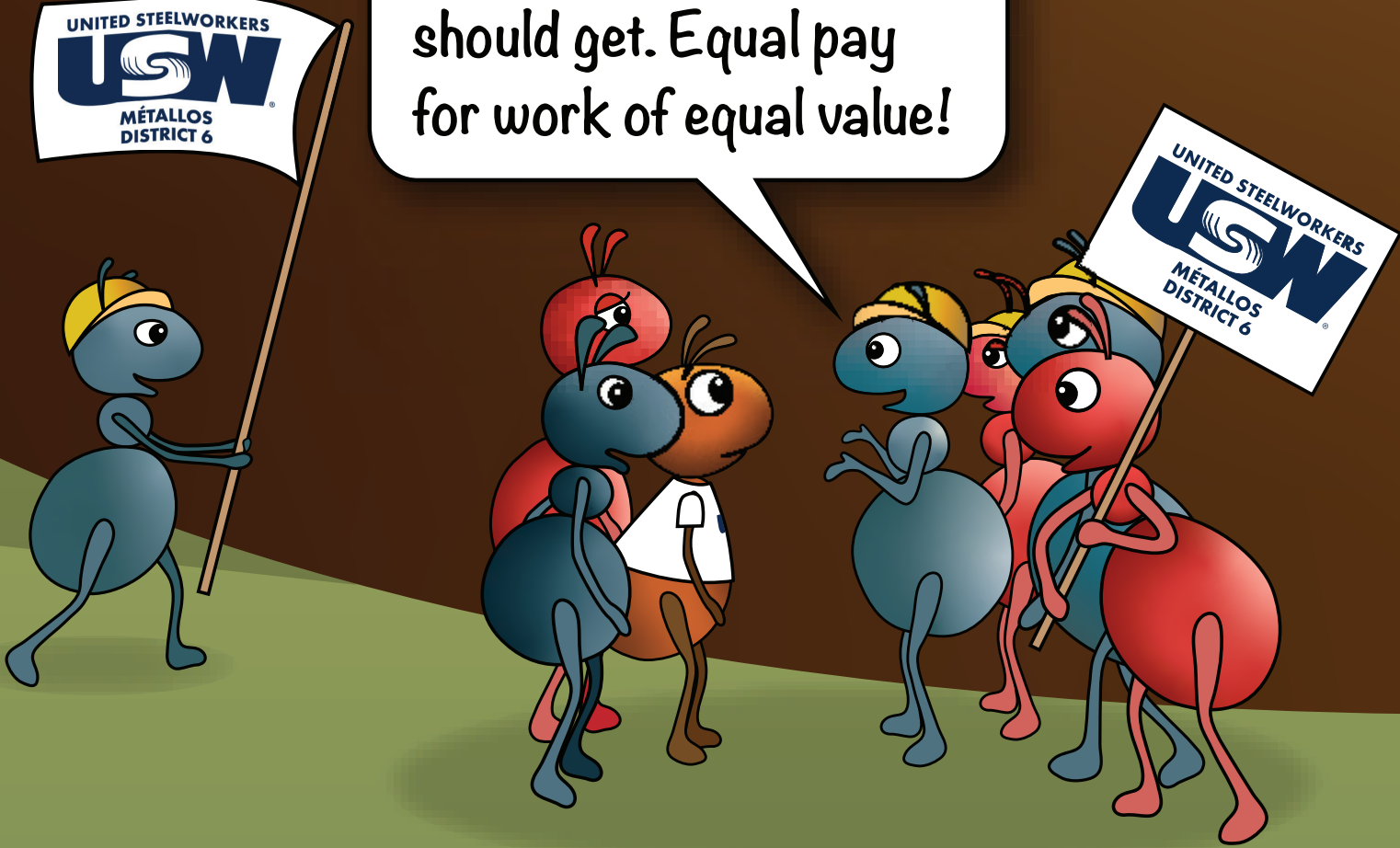


Little Ant says, “It’s not fair that they are trying to pay new workers less! A two-tier system hurts everyone.”

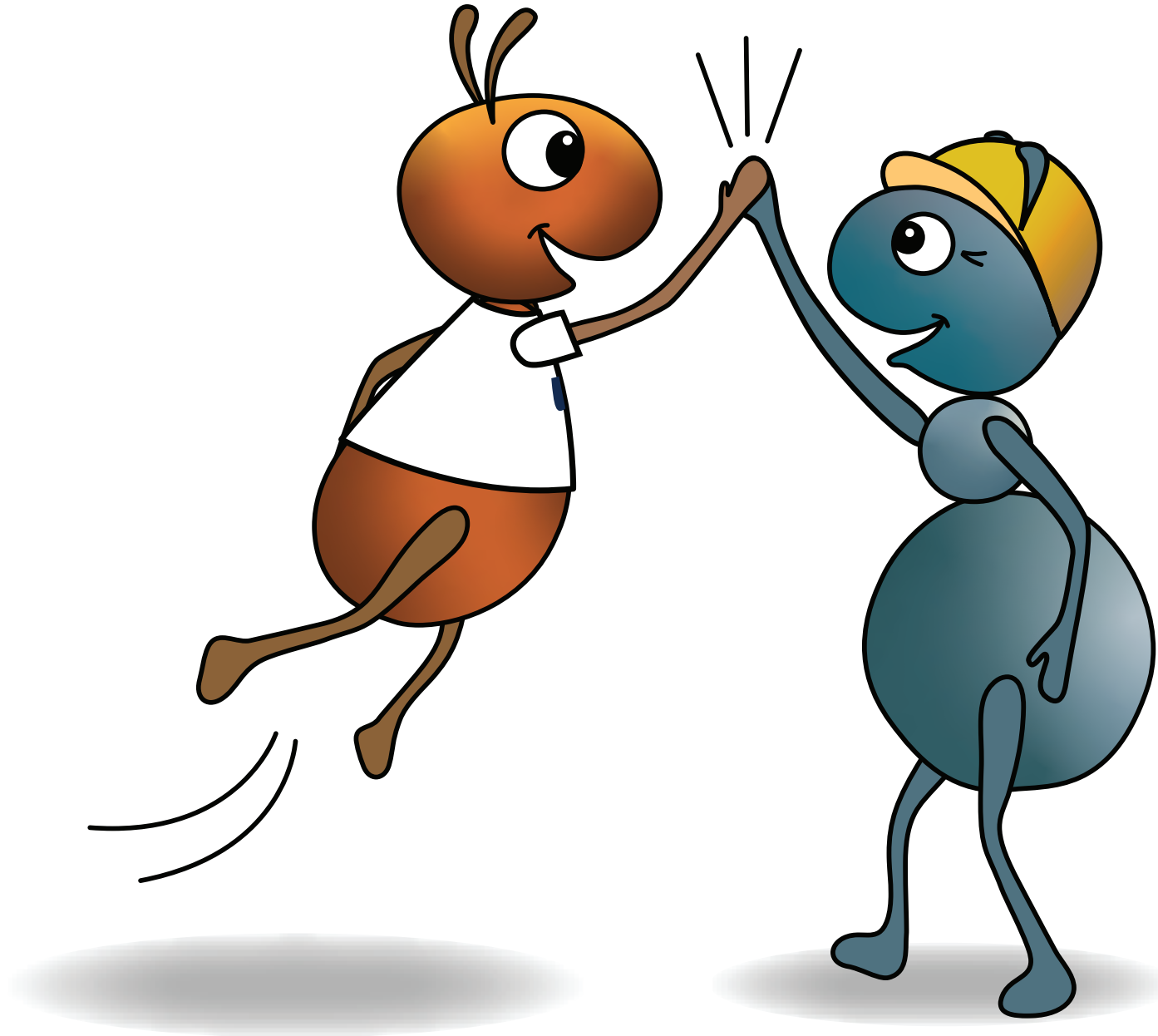
Their cousins tell them that pensions are very important too. A pension is money saved from working that workers use once they retire and stop working.

Little Ant's cousins tell them that their local believes that every ant at their Hill should be treated equally.

Benefits and pensions are things every worker should get. Equal pay for work of equal value!

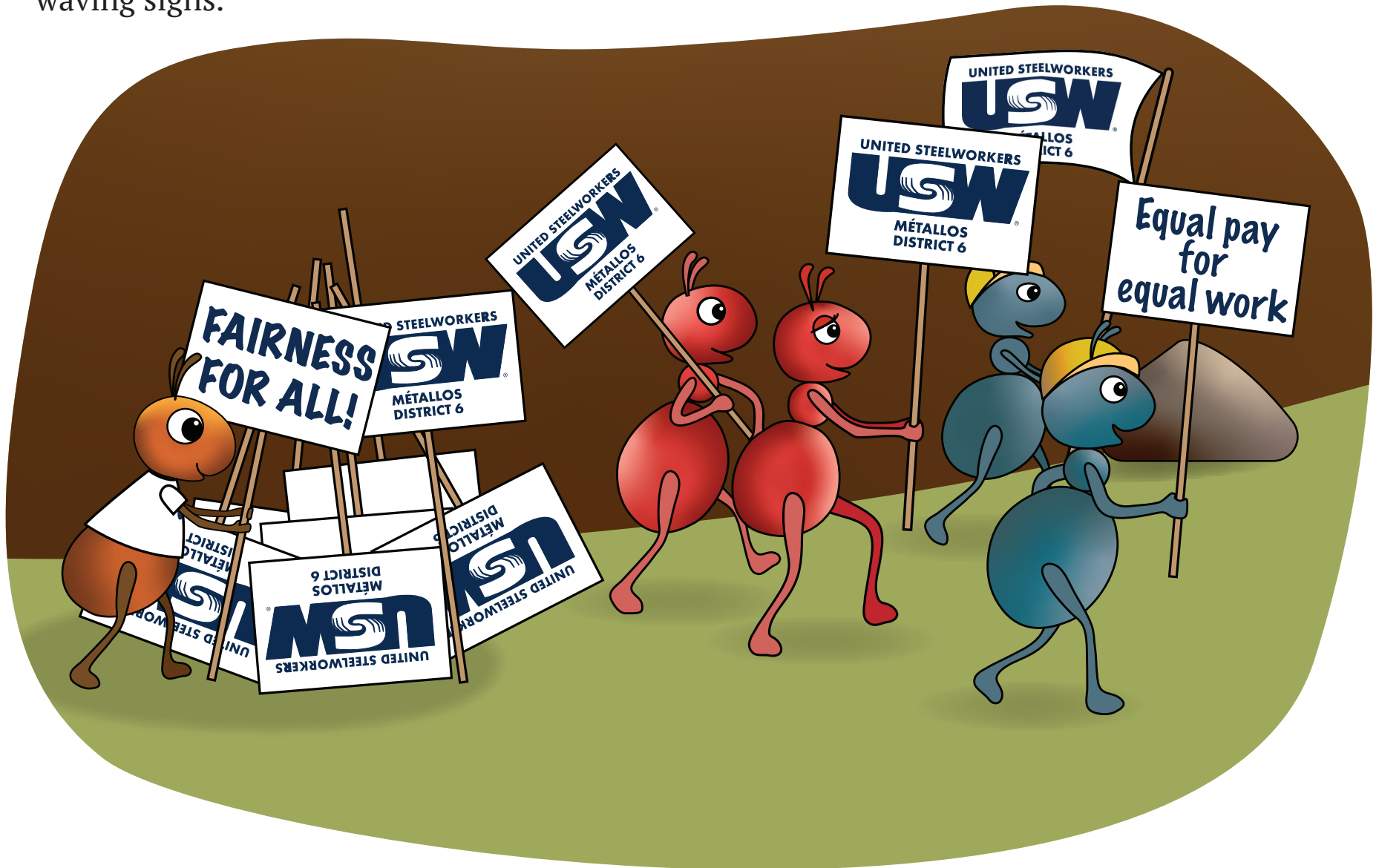


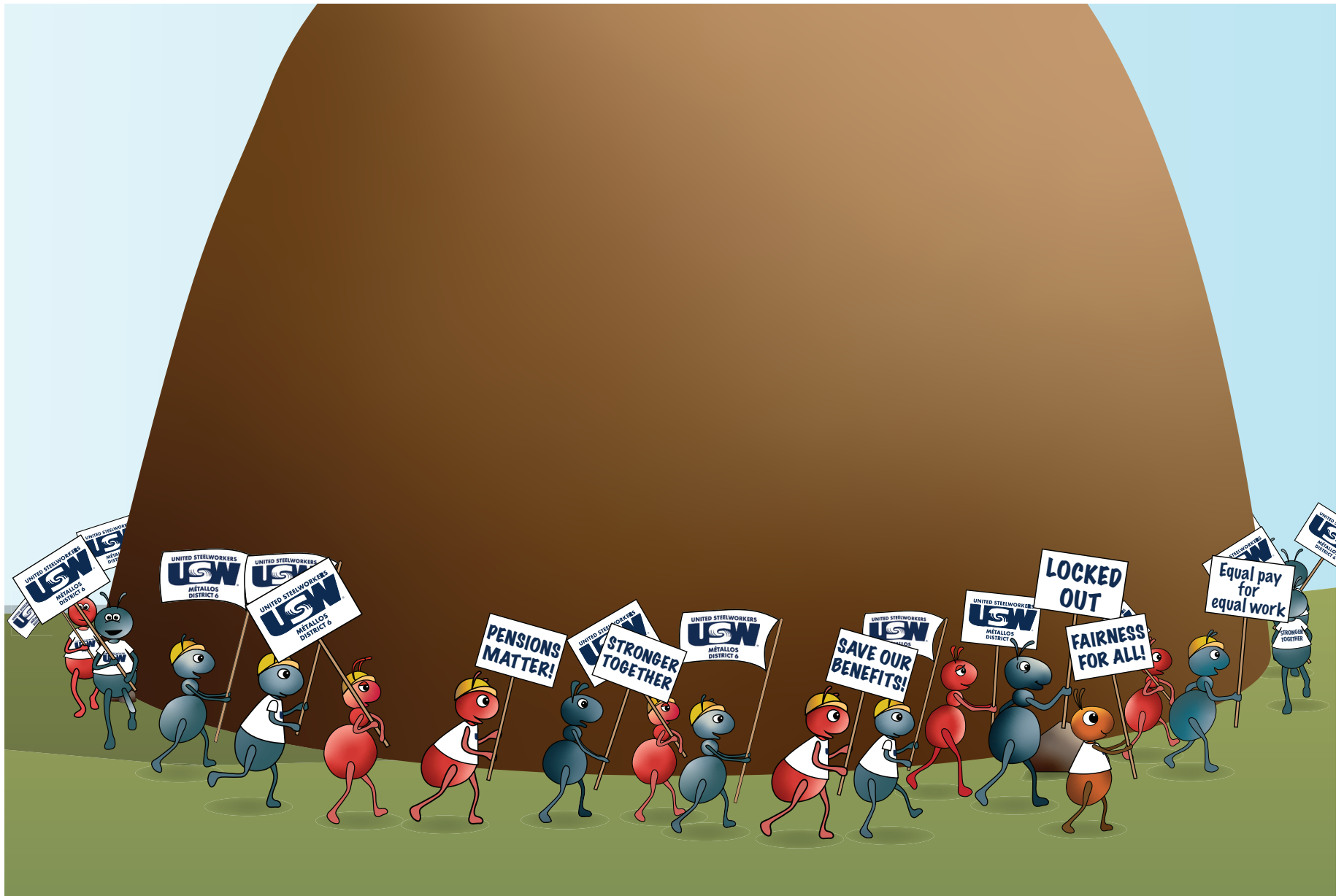
Little Ant agrees. It is not fair to treat some workers better than others! If they are doing the same work, everyone should be getting the same support.



Little Ant and their cousins grab signs and start walking outside the Hill.

The workers are not allowed inside the Hill, but they can raise attention to their lockout by waving signs.

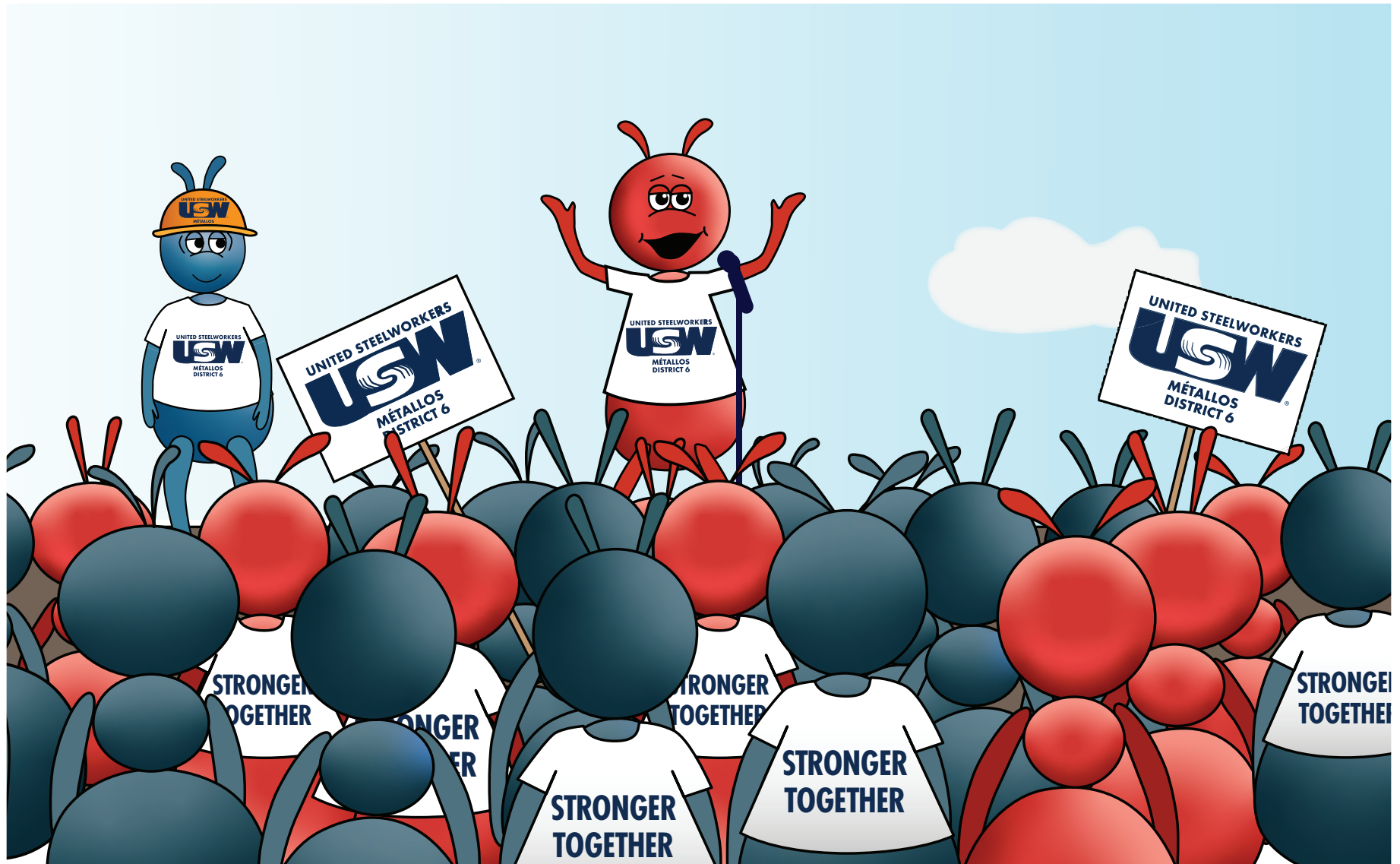


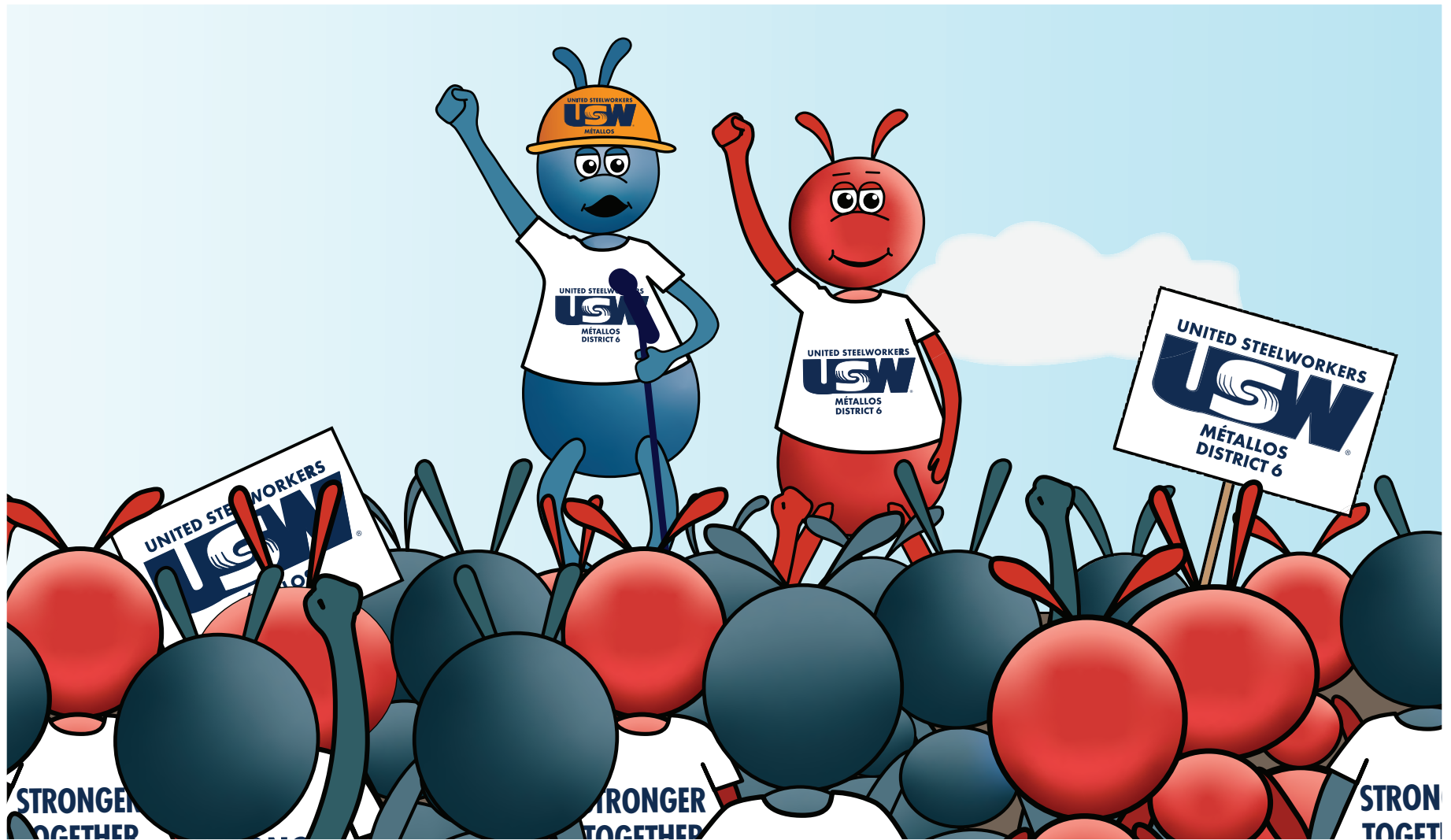


Little Ant walks with their family and friends all around the Hill.

At the stage, a speaker takes the microphone.

She talks about how it hurts workers and their communities when bosses don't treat workers fairly.



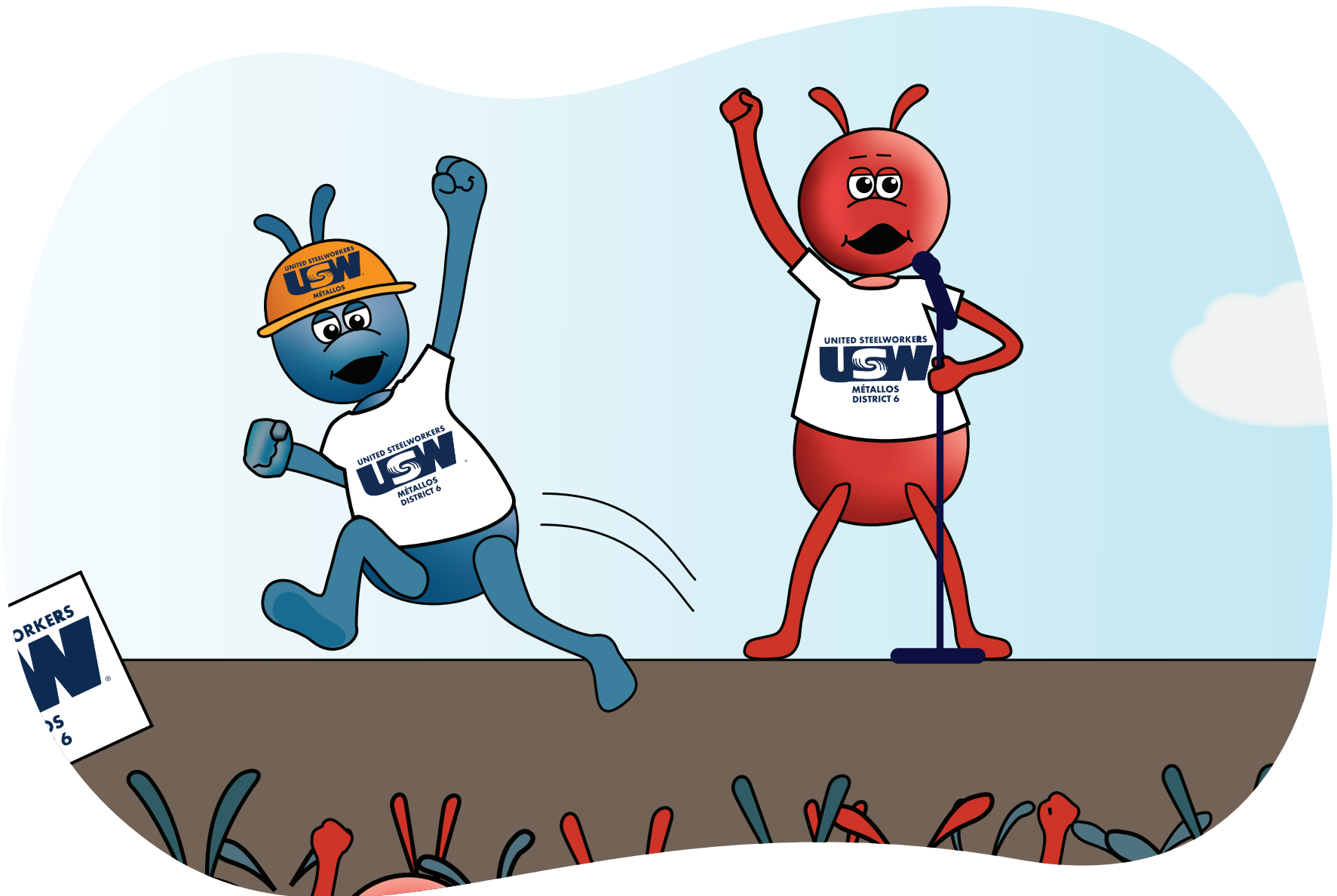


She says, “one day longer is one day stronger. The union won’t back down to the company’s unfair request.”

The local union President steps up and thanks everyone for coming out to show their support.

“Solidarity! The company has agreed to begin talking about a new agreement again.”

He jumps off the stage and picks up a sign to start walking with everyone.

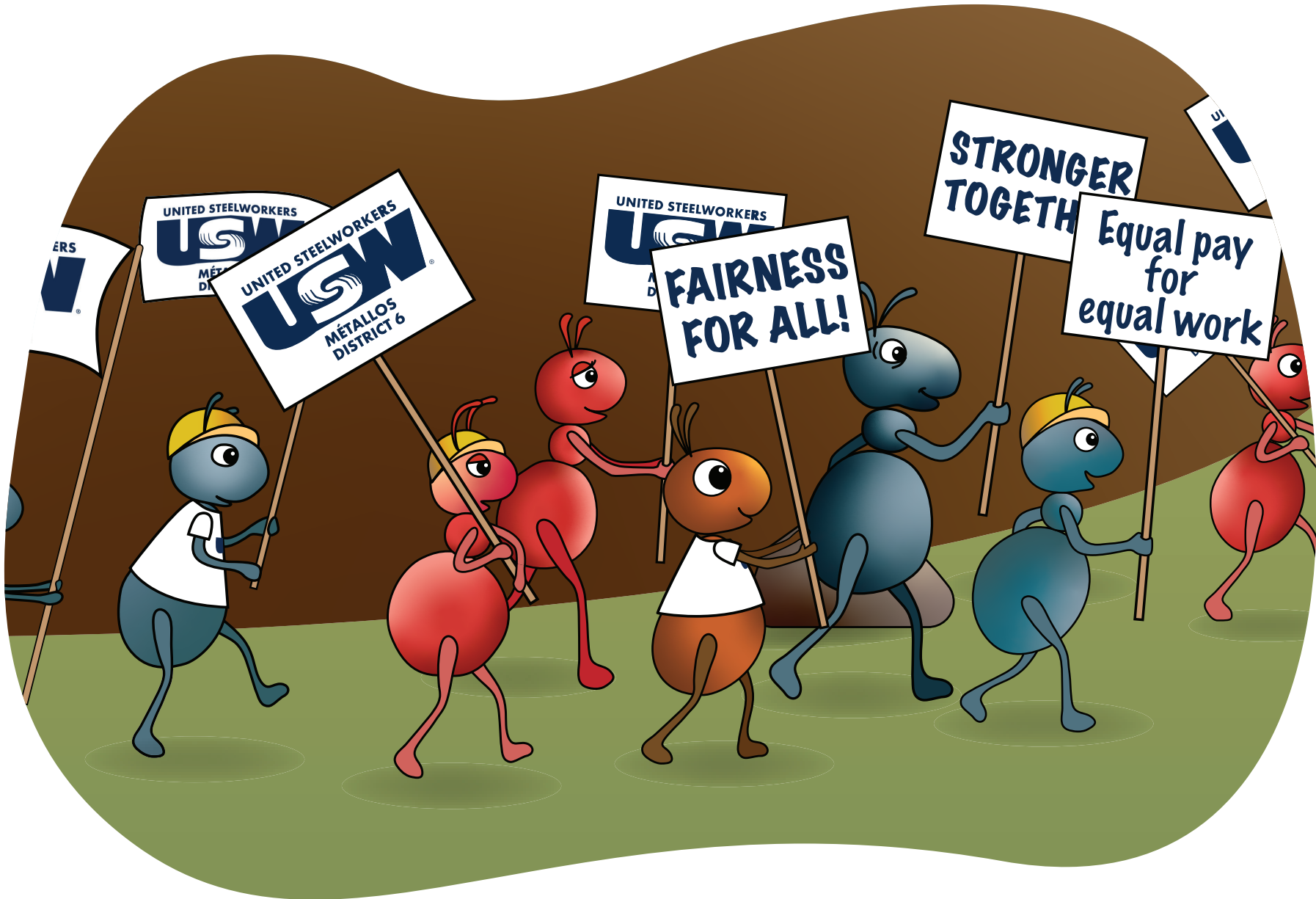


On the way home, Little Ant tells their sister they want to go back to their cousins' Hill next week to keep showing support.

Other ants from their local agree to join them.

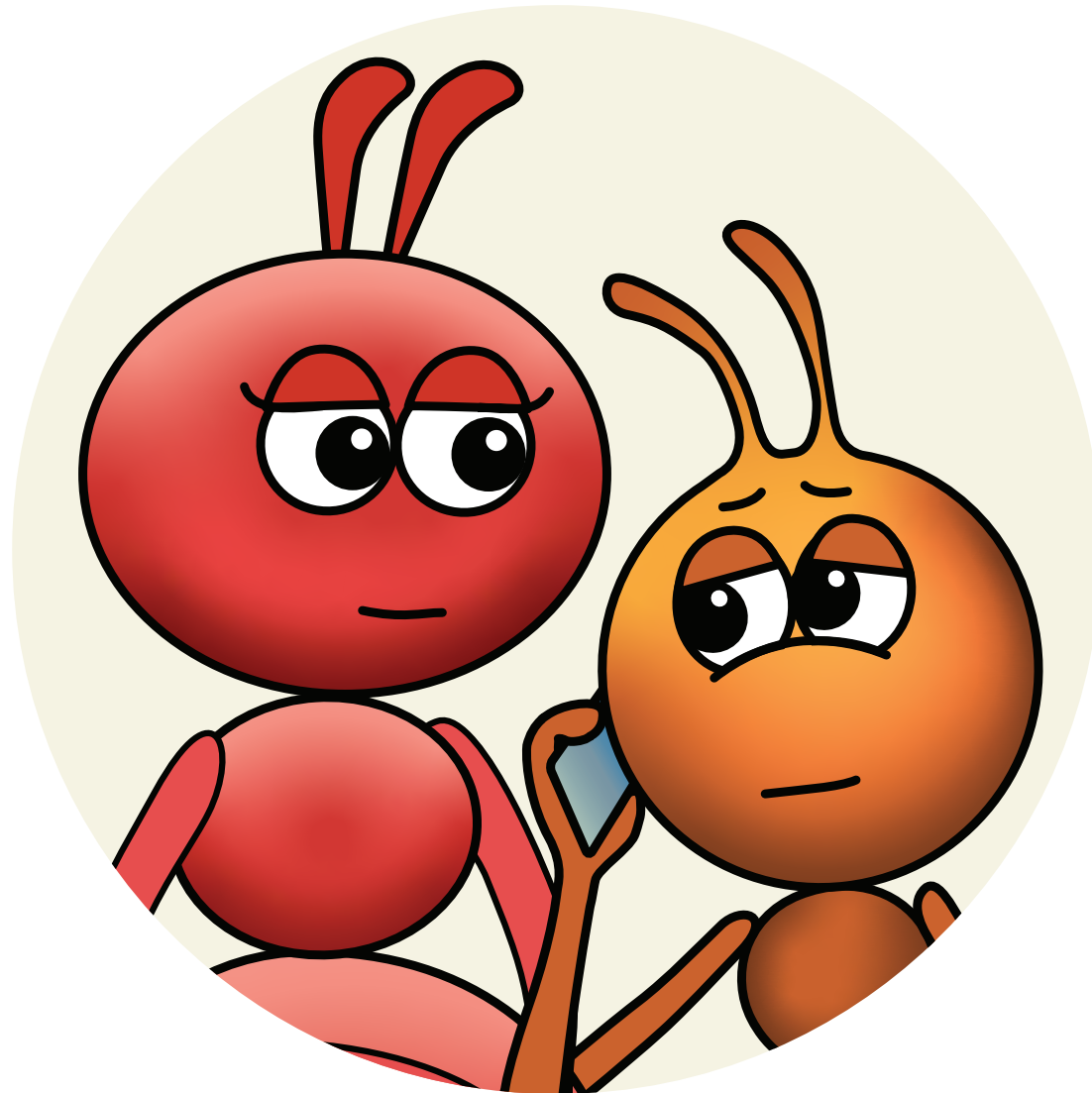


For the next few weeks, Little Ant and their friends go back to their cousins' Hill. They walk the line again to show solidarity.

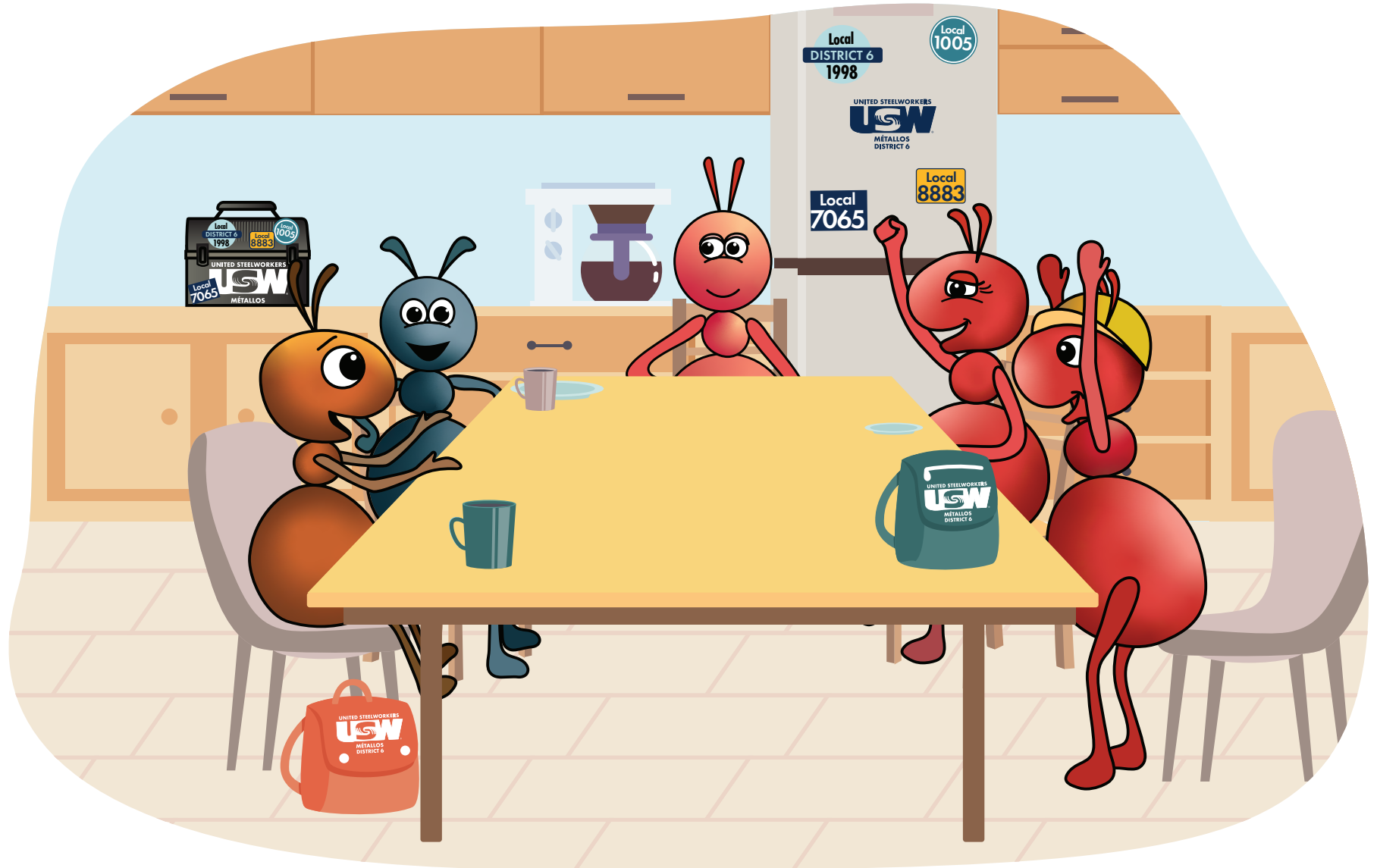


One night, Little Ant's cousins call them. They tell them that they might have a new agreement at work, but that the local's members have to decide if they want to say yes to it.

Little Ant and their sister hope for the best.



A few days later, Little Ant learns that everyone at their cousins' Hill is going back to work. They were able to come to an agreement with the company!





Little Ant is happy that their cousins are back on the job. Their dad tells them that he is very proud of them and their sister for going to their cousins' Hill and showing solidarity.

Glossary

Bargaining – Workers identify changes they need in their pay and working conditions. Using the collective power and solidarity of their union, they meet with the company to negotiate improvements.

Company – The organization the workers work for. It focuses on the interests of its business, and the union focuses on the interests of the workers.

Local - A branch of a union in a specific workplace. Each local union receives a unique number to tell them apart.

Lockout – Sometimes during bargaining, the company doesn't accept the union's proposals and literally locks its doors to stop its workers from working. It also stops paying the workers.

Solidarity - When people show support for and help one another. The best example of solidarity is “an injury to one is an injury to all.”

Strike – Sometimes during bargaining, the workers vote to reject the company's proposals. They stop working, and the company stops paying them.

Union - A group of workers who come together to protect their rights and interests at their jobs.

USW – Short for the United Steelworkers. USW is a labour union that represents a diverse group of workers who do many different jobs. Our union believes in Unity and Strength for Workers.



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