

DID THE RICH AND POWERFUL SELL OUT THE LITTLE GUY?

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I bought three Champion spark plugs at NAPA the other day. Like many items I buy, I look to see where they are made. The plugs were made in Mexico. They once were made here. The people who made them had good paying jobs. Entire careers were spent with one company and the local economy benefited.

My brother in law's father spent his working life making plugs for Delco in Syracuse. He retired from there with benefits. Many others of my neighbors worked there and at several other manufacturing jobs in the area. Most of those plants and jobs are gone. Where and why is the question.

The where is simple? They have been transferred to foreign countries. Some, but not all, were a series of trade agreements. The most famous and controversial of these was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It was finalized in 1994 and endorsed by a majority of members of both political parties. Ross Perot made it controversial with his famous statement "The huge sucking sound you will hear is your jobs leaving the country."

If NAFTA stood for North American *Fair* Trade Agreement, it may not have proven to be quite so controversial.

In a recent column on the subject, Charley Reese had this, among other things, to say: "American jobs are being exported, and cheap labor in the form of illegal immigrants is being imported. If you want to create social conflict, then create a situation in which surplus people have to fight each other over the crumbs at the bottom of the economic ladder."

"The heads of these corporations are swine. They dump Americans into the unemployment lines, exploit foreign labor like a 19th century slave owner, and then gorge American consumers, relying on advertising and celebrity endorsements to peddle their junk."

Reese concludes his article by pointing out two things all countries must have if they are to prosper: strong agriculture and a strong manufacturing base, and that both of these pillars of prosperity are eroding to the point of collapse.

We hear politicians on both sides of the aisle loudly proclaiming that they have the answer. The Democrats, when they are not elevating Saddam Hussein and trashing the head of our government and blaming our economic woes on him, fail to point out most of them backed NAFTA on January 1, 1994 under Clinton's reign. Now that it's not working out so well, perhaps they only voted for it like their endorsement of the Iraq War – they could only be counted on if all went well.

How are they or anyone else going to bring back jobs that are no longer here? It's too late to lock the barn door after the horse has been stolen.

I have had a long held theory on how all of this came about and like all politics it is based on money. Further, it reinforces Bill O'Reilly's theory that the rich and powerful stick together regardless of their political philosophy.

My theory began to develop on June 13, 1978 at Andrews Air Force Base. My wife and I were guests at General George Brown's retirement ceremony. General Brown was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was a grand affair as one might expect with high-ranking military officers from several nations of the world in attendance.

After the formal activities were concluded, we were attending a reception in the Officers Club. I was introduced to Colonel Viuner who was long retired and 95 years old. In the course of our conversation he explained that General Brown was a graduate of West Point, but that the first two years of his military college training were spent at Virginia Military Institute and not at West Point. He had been unable to get into West Point initially, but with the Colonel's help he was accepted for his last two years.

The Colonel explained that his family owned a large printing business and that they had been paying a union head \$5,000 a year to keep the union out of their shop. The union representative got General Brown into West Point.

It's a well-known fact that politicians of both parties and unions enjoy a most amicable relationship. It's also a well-documented fact that large sums of money change hands between large corporations, politicians, and unions.

To make a long story short, could the little guy and taxpayer have been sold out by the rich and powerful? And the country as well?

The trend started long before NAFTA. It began as a trickle and soon became a flood. Remember, for instance, the days when Massachusetts was the shoe-manufacturing center of the country? Was their long time senior Senator Kennedy complicit or complacent to the erosion? In either case, he was derelict in his duty and the citizens of Massachusetts have no one to blame but themselves for voting for him

The same can be said for the mess in California with the recall situation. The voters in that State are responsible and should have to live with their mistakes.

My dad used to say that if you get a blister on our seat you will have to sit on it.