

Hello Sisters and Brothers,

I think of myself as a glass half full kind of person. With the articles below, I believe the glass of our nation is falling below half full. The articles below are from on International Office. It paints a picture of the direction our country is headed. Please read on...

Fed Report Paints Grim Picture for Younger Workers

Faced with falling incomes and rising debt, America's young workers are finding it harder and harder to achieve the middle-class living standards their parents enjoyed.

A new survey released by the Federal Reserve Board found median incomes actually dropped for householders under 45 between 2001 and 2004. When adjusting for inflation, income fell 8 percent for those under 35 and 9 percent for those between 35 and 44 years old.

Older households, meanwhile, have seen their incomes grow in recent years. For workers age 45 to 54, family income has increased 23 percent since 1995.

Rising health care costs, a shaky job market, stagnant wages and the rising cost of higher education are some of the main reasons younger workers find themselves with less income than previous generations.

U.S. Wage Gap Widens

Inequality between the rich and middle/lower income families continues to widen, according to a recent Economic Policy Institute and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Report which shows the incomes of the wealthy have skyrocketed over the past 20 years, while the rest of working America has seen only modest gains.

A major factor in the inequality is the declining real value of the minimum wage. Minimum wage workers earned only 32% of the average hourly wage in 2005, according to the report.

The average hourly wage was \$16.41 in January 2006. In order to reach 50% of the average wage, which was the level experienced in the 1950s and 1960s, the minimum wage would need to be raised from \$5.15 to \$8.20. Raising the minimum wage would improve purchasing power for lower income families and help curb the growing income inequality within the United States.

Job Killing Trade Deficit Hits New Record

The U.S. trade deficit soared to \$725.8 billion in 2005, the fourth year in a row the deficit hit a new high. The country's trade shortfall with China last year came to \$201.6 billion, the highest deficit ever recorded with any country.

Economists say the deficit is well in excess of what many consider to be safe territory, not only because of the sheer size of the trade deficit, but because a number of trends raise doubts about the United States ability to rein in spending in the future.

Experts say large trade deficits can jeopardize an economy's long-term health, and trade deficits in excess of 4 to 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product can also lead to rapid inflation and higher interest rates. The current deficit amounts to 5.8 percent of the GDP.

Job growth during the last five years in key sectors of the economy is also the weakest on record. Manufacturing lost more than 3 million jobs, nearly 17 percent of the entire workforce. Communications lost 43 percent of its workforce, while semiconductors and electronic components lost 37 percent.

The hemorrhage in jobs is not limited to hourly workers. There are 209,000 fewer managerial and supervisory jobs today than there were five years ago.

OK, Rick is back writing...

This information could be described as gloom and doom. This could be described as liberal media picking the worst out. Those folks saying this are full of it and themselves.

I call this the truth of our direction as a country.

In the last 5 years, I am sick of hearing making a good wage is a bad thing, pensions are something that is too expensive for any company, healthcare should be your concern- not your employers, CEO's can take as much pay as possible from a company and on and on and on. This administration in Washington is sending these messages. How on earth did these people get elected?? By Americans not voting is one reason. Not being involved politically is another. Not caring what happens to other people is another. We, as Americans, are better than this.

I for one know this country is on the wrong course. I think having your kids do better than you is a great thing. I think the minimum wage should go up. I think the trade policy is not fair – America is the dumping ground for low wage products.

I ask all Union to think about a trade deficit of a trillion or 2 trillion dollars. Think about your kids not doing as well as you. (They may NEVER move out) Think about all high wage jobs being outsourced overseas. What is left for us Americans??

The ways to change this is VOTE each and every opportunity! Get involved politically! Throw the bums out of Washington. Get involved to change this wrong way and make it a right way. District 66 has a Legislative Committee anyone can serve on. Talk or write to your Senator or Congressman. Call us up, we will give you the addresses.

I want to remind all members of the District 66 Scholarship Contest for high school seniors. Time is running out to submit your essay. Call Carla at the District for details at 608-784-2025.

I am closing with story that is funny, but not true. My immediate apologies to our attorney Ross Seymour.

TOO MANY: 4 men were traveling together on a train in Europe. One was from Russia, one from Cuba and two were from America. Three of them were businessmen and one of the remaining Americans was a lawyer. They got to talking. The Russian pulled out a bottle of vodka - they all took a drink, then the Russian threw rest of bottle out the window. When the American businessman asked why, the Russian replied "Oh, we have so much vodka in Russia - we'll never drink it all!" Then the Cuban took out a tin of Havana cigars - he gave everybody one, then he threw the rest out the window. When asked why, he replied "Oh, we have so much tobacco in Cuba, we'll never smoke it all!" Well, the American businessman, not to be outdone, thought for a moment, and then ended up pushing the American lawyer out the window!

The joke is from a good website of Grant M. Bright. Google his name for the link, select the "Frame Director for Bright Quotes" and plan on an hour to go through it all.

I appreciate all of the comments on our column from the Union Folk and I thank you for listening to me. Have a great month!

Rick Mickschl, Direct Business Rep., Machinists Union District 66