

Outsource the Neocons!



While flying back to the good old USA, I read a letter to a newspaper from an Illinois factory worker who had lost his job to some sweatshop out in the Far

East. He told of his efforts to keep some kind of dignity as well as the wolf from his door. The letter was well written, and the writer came through as a decent person who wanted to find work rather than a handout.

Although Pat Buchanan wrote about suicide by free trade in the last issue, a column by George Will compels me to comment further. Here's what he had to say about the perils of protectionism in *Newsweek*: "Protectionism is intellectuals' Louis Vuitton luggage—a luxury for persons comfortably placed in societies with social surpluses so large they can sustain the injuries protectionism does to economic growth."

Who are these purveyors of Louis Vuitton luggage? They turn out to be none other than ordinary American workers who find themselves thrown out of work as a result of being undercut by low-paid workers in Africa and Asia. The latter, poor wretches, are willing and ready to work in sweatshop conditions for \$1 an hour, if that.

"Workers disadvantaged by globalization," Will announces dismissively, "are few but concentrated, attentive and intense." Well, not as intense as George Will gets when face to face with, say, Lally Weymouth or some other hysterical but rich female. The message from Mr. Will is that these people should simply shut the hell up and be a lot more solicitous about the economic well-being of poor African countries, just like he is.

Now of course George couldn't care less about poor Africans. They come in handy in order to make a point but

hardly ever give a chic cocktail party inside the Beltway. But this column is not about Africa. (It would take a *War and Peace*-like opus just to list the murders and thievery of African leaders). It's about American jobs and American workers. And what I'd like to know is whose interests are being protected when corporations close down their factories in the United States and open them in Gabon because labor there is a lot cheaper? Whose interests are being protected when these corporations then re-import these goods into the United States at prices so low that they, in turn, help drive domestic producers out of business? Certainly shareholders do very well out of this. Without any extra work, labor costs are suddenly smaller, profits are larger, and the value of their shares is higher. American workers, on the other hand, are now out of work.

Please don't get me wrong. I'm all for shareholders' profits. I am, after all, the son of a capitalist. But with a difference. My family moolah comes from industries and ships. We created jobs and offered them to Greeks when in Greece, to Sudanese when in the Sudan, and to Americans when in America. We didn't close down factories at home and open them up abroad, like the Heinz corporation does in order to keep John Kerry's wife in the style she's never been accustomed to.

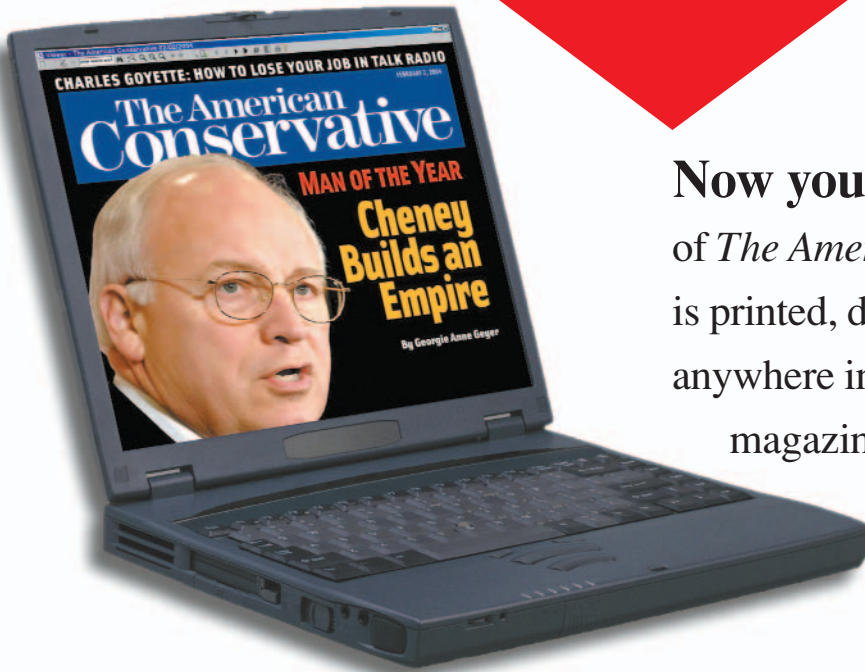
Once upon a time, the state was required to defend the nation's borders as well as the people's jobs. Now the crooks in Washington no longer protect the nation's borders, and the corporate crooks no longer give jobs to Ameri-

cans. What in hell is going on here? I'll tell you. People like George Will, that's what.

As a conservative, I favor social stability over shareholder value. The great bourgeois world of the past was built on families confident that the man of the house would always have a job and that his income would rise slowly but steadily. Nothing guarantees instability so much as unemployment or the fear of unemployment. The Wills of this world fulminate about cosseted Americans and extol the virtues of competition and suggest that there is something elitist and scandalous about wanting to ensure that American workers are not out of work and are paid reasonably. These champions of free trade claim that cheap imports mean cheaper consumer goods, but if people are out of work, they don't have the money to buy these goods. If people's pay is driven down every year because that's the only way that companies are able to compete with Third World sweatshops, then there won't be anyone to buy those cheap cars and DVDs—other than people like George Will who make their money by posturing and posing.

However, I do think free trade is sometimes reasonable. I propose that we outsource George Will, David Frum, and the rest of the neoconservative pack to India. There's probably a sweatshop in Bombay that can churn out neocon drivel at a far brisker pace and for less than 50 cents an hour. Imagine what ABC could do with all that money they would save by no longer paying George Will's exorbitant salary! The unemployed Illinois factory worker cum letter-writer made more sense than the fully employed but pompous George ever did. ■

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