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Subject: Letter from Ohio voters about outsourcing  
Date: Wed, 11 Aug 2004 11:23:28 -0400

Monday morning, I sent the following letter to 2 senior members of the Kerry Campaign. Eight concerned Ohio white collar workers signed with me. (Others have since expressed interest in signing; they will be included in any follow-up letters.) We do not know how it will be received but we are not satisfied with the present discussion of "free trade", outsourcing and worker replacement. We do not believe that the problem will in any way be affected by tweaking corporate tax codes as recent DNC ads imply ("job killing tax loopholes"). The job losses in manufacturing and services are rooted in more than 10 years of trade policy failure and a willingness to undermine the labor market and living standards of American workers. Please feel free to share and post on your web site. (Marcus Courtney and I had a good conversation about this yesterday.)

Best rgds,  
John Pardon  
Dayton, Ohio

Senator Kerry and Members of the Kerry Campaign:

We are writing to you as concerned citizens, registered voters, and potential supporters in the State of Ohio. We live and work in Ohio: the state that many are calling "ground zero" for John Kerry's election or George Bush's re-election. We believe that you are interested in our opinions and gaining our support and the support of many other voters in Ohio and across the U.S. who have similar concerns. Our issues are translatable into a program for political action and we are willing to help you achieve this.

Middle class job losses due to "outsourcing" and what many now term "American worker replacement programs" (H-1b and L-1 visa guest worker programs) have become issues on the media's radar screen. (See, for example, CNN's Lou Dobbs' daily program for the "Outsourcing America" series of reports.) We are gratified by this attention. These issues having been of concern to us for far longer than the popular media. These are issues which we and many others similarly situated must grapple with on a daily basis. We need look no further than our own employment situations or our local, state and national job markets to observe shrinking employment opportunities, diminished compensation, deteriorating work conditions and the increased threat of job loss in our career fields.

This said, it should not be surprising that we will base our vote on the outsourcing/worker replacement issue. For this reason, we want specific position statements from Senator Kerry indicating that he will oppose outsourcing and worker replacement programs. We want to hear Sen. Kerry publicly embrace policies which reflect a genuine, credible commitment to take effective executive action against outsourcing and the use of foreign replacement workers if elected President.

Clearly, President Bush has embraced free trade, outsourcing and worker replacement programs. He plans to "stay the course". This is unacceptable. We understand the positions of Mr. Nader. The question is whether you are sufficiently concerned about outsourcing and middle class job losses to take real action. Some have concluded that Mr. Nader is the only candidate who will address these issues. Your response will determine if this belief widens.

If Sen. Kerry seriously reflects upon the results of nearly a decade of free trade policy, he will surely note that the American middle class jobs base is shrinking. Our industrial sector is disappearing and our knowledge age jobs are evaporating at an accelerating pace. There is nothing on the employment horizon to take their place; corporations are already planning to outsource the next generation of high tech jobs in emerging fields such as biotechnology and nanotechnology. Of course, none of these fields hold the promise of an employment future for millions of displaced American workers let alone the new graduates of American colleges and universities.

We are middle class "white-collar" workers in "knowledge age" jobs. While our situation has been increasingly reported in the media, we are very frustrated because our issues have not been adequately addressed by those in elected office. We are not interested in sympathetic public statements and hollow promises for additional studies and "blue ribbon" commissions. We want serious political action from the people elected to represent the best interests of ALL Americans.

Our frustration is fueled by the fact that we are losing the "post-industrial" jobs that were supposed to be our national future and the guarantee of a broad prosperous middle class society. The bitter irony that we encounter is that the "knowledge age" jobs are disappearing offshore at a faster rate than the "blue-collar" industrial/manufacturing jobs. Our deep anxiety is further exacerbated by the fact that of the knowledge age jobs which remain in the U.S., an increasing percentage are being filled by non-American "guest workers" imported under the H-1b and L-1 visa programs.

We are seeing the complete failure of free trade (as it is currently practiced): the middle class blue collar manufacturing jobs are mostly gone offshore and we, the "knowledge age" workers are losing our jobs offshore and targeted for replacement in our own country! This is absolutely intolerable! We want action to deal with the reality that free trade has turned into global labor arbitrage. (See for example, the comments of Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley in the NYT July 22 op-ed "More Jobs, Worse Work" and the consistently thoughtful economic writings of Paul Craig Roberts.)

No doubt you have taken note of Dr. Mankiw's incendiary comments supporting the logic of outsourcing. You have seen how President Bush travels around the country calling opponents of outsourcing "isolationists" and "protectionists" as he spins a tale of economic recovery. But Bush and Mankiw have a flawed understanding of the U.S. economy: they are focused solely on the markets, the Wall Street analysts, the CEOs and the economic proponents of free trade. The very real shrinkage of American middle class jobs available to Americans has been left out of the equation. You are aware of the significant middle class job losses in the industrial sectors. We are sorely aware of the loss of middle class jobs in the white collar technical, scientific, professional, and "back-office" sectors. We can find few middle class jobs where our physical strength or brain power makes a difference for us and our families.

We exemplify the fact that the outsourcing/worker replacement issue has traction in this election but the issue demands honesty. We have friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues who will vote for candidates based on this issue if they are presented with a clear-cut choice which directly addresses their interests. We want to make the case that you should take this issue very seriously and move beyond discussion of merely enforcing existing labor and environmental "side agreements". These "side agreements" have no relevance whatsoever to the job losses and salary stagnation now experienced by American white collar workers.

We believe that outsourcing is an issue which has the potential to bring about a political realignment. If John Kerry will truly become the "champion of the middle class", he may split many middle-class white-collar voters from the Republican Party, gain the support of Independents, bring new and disillusioned voters into the election, and make them all part of a wider Democratic majority in an information age political realignment comparable to the New Deal coalition of FDR.

Job loss, fear of job loss, unemployment and underemployment is widespread in America and Ohio. The media reports only begin to scratch the surface of the fear, anxiety and anger of workers. There are many angry and desperate middle class white collar workers who want a clear voice speaking unmistakably on their behalf. If you wish to win the votes of the white collar "knowledge age" workers, you must increase the focus on the real problems we have outlined here.

We want immediate and appropriate action taken on behalf of American white collar workers. First, we want Senator Kerry and Senator Edwards to oppose outsourcing and worker replacement programs which target white collar workers. Second, we want Senator Kerry and Senator Edwards to publicly embrace policies which reflect a genuine, credible commitment to take effective legislative and executive action against outsourcing and the use of foreign replacement workers beyond "tweaking" the corporate tax code.

We urge Senator Kerry and Senator Edwards to take the following specific actions:

- Publicly state your support for deliberate and comprehensive action to stop the influx of low-wage replacement workers into the U.S. under the pretext of non-existent

"labor shortages". ("Capping" the total number of H-1b and L-1 workers permitted into the U.S. is not a real solution.)

- Support or Initiate legislation to prohibit corporations from requiring Americans to train foreign replacement workers as conditions of continued employment or as qualifications for severance.
- Co-sponsor Senator Dodd's S.1452 reform bill in the Senate (the companion to Rep. Johnson's H.R.2849 reform bill in the House) (See <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:SN01452>: )
- Use the public "bully pulpit" to pressure corporations against outsourcing while campaigning, on the Senate floor, and, if elected, in the Oval Office.
- Support or initiate measures requiring detailed corporate reporting of all jobs moved offshore to overseas subsidiaries, foreign contractors, outsourcing companies such as Accenture, or filled by foreign workers in the U.S. on visa.
- Take action to make outsourcing and worker replacement as difficult, costly, and irrational as possible for corporations doing business in the United States and desiring access to the U.S. market.
- Support legislation, executive orders, and agency regulations which create incentives for the use of American workers in government contracts to eliminate companies such as Accenture from the bidding process or require them to adhere to "domestic content" provisions necessitating the use of American workers on government contracts.

We are not naïve. It is true that the pro-outsourcing lobby (e.g., ITAA, CompeteAmerica, Chamber of Commerce) is powerful but if Democratic Party politicians will reach out to white collar workers and recognize that they need a champion as much as the industrial workers, this is an election which Sen. Kerry can win in Ohio and around the U.S. White collar "knowledge workers" will respond to specific promises which secure their opportunity to compete and succeed in our society. The white collar workers are, after all, the children and grandchildren of laborers, factory workers, shopkeepers and farmers who believed that education and hard work was the key to middle class life. The white collar workers are not a captive Republican constituency

Now, there is an increasingly wide sense that the middle class has been "conned" or betrayed. We in the middle class see shrinking opportunities and an inability to compete for the jobs that we do well. The American Dream is becoming more myth than reality. There is a definite need for national leadership to rekindle the spirit of middle class life in America. This is the part of the equation that John Kerry, John Edwards, and Barack Obama did not include in what were otherwise passionate and persuasive convention speeches. Progress, for middle and lower class Americans, requires an expansion of middle class employment opportunities -- not a shrinkage of information age job opportunities.

The greatest corporate scandal is not Enron or Global Crossing. We find it scandalous that many nominally American multi-national corporations now consider American workers disposable and replaceable commodities in a global labor auction. We believe it is scandalous for American political leaders to have enacted laws and trade agreements which permit corporations to treat Americans as disposable commodities in a system of global labor arbitrage. Outsourcing and

worker replacement programs dehumanize Americans, crush families, decimate communities, undermine our society, make claims of corporate social accountability unbelievable and deepen the conviction that political leaders are unconcerned with the general welfare of Americans.

We believe that many free trade enthusiasts in business and politics have been disingenuous about the real suffering of American workers. They have joined in a conspiracy of "no comment" re. massive layoffs. This is symptomatic of a tremendous "disconnect" in our society. It is clear to us that most new middle class jobs are not being created in the U.S. -- they're being created offshore. The beneficiaries of the outsourcing are not working Americans. (Of the middle class jobs created in the U.S., many in the Information Technology field are filled by H-1b or L-1 visa workers but government reporting statistics cited by Bush actually report these as "jobs created" without differentiating between jobs filled by Americans and jobs filled by non-citizens!)

We hear a great deal of talk about the alleged future benefits of free trade and outsourcing from some in the press, business and politics but these alleged benefits are heavy on vague, unsubstantiated hope rather than realistic expectations and hard facts. We Americans are not "innovating" ourselves out of this problem as the pro-outsourcing voices claim. Opportunities for wider American middle-class employment and innovation in areas of "high tech" is increasingly unlikely with every new job loss. This should cause great concern.

While our situation defies easy answers, we do expect more than policies of obfuscation, avoidance and evasion. (We note that both elected Democrats and Republicans have engaged in these tactics.) We observe that while President Bush and Senator Kerry discuss job creation and retraining, they fail to acknowledge the full scope of what is going offshore and what is left in the U.S. ALL the newest high-tech and professional employment sectors that can be moved offshore is going offshore or plans are being made for some future transfer. (For example, venture capitalists now demand an offshore component in even the newest IPO's!) The jobs moving offshore are not the monotonous and low-skill jobs as some outsourcing proponents contend. These jobs are at the core of the middle class "white collar" employment sector.

The latest, white collar victims of outsourcing are in a quandary. Many are well educated, technically proficient, and highly skilled "knowledge workers". What should well-educated members of the middle class retrain to do? What jobs are NOT going offshore or being filled by non-immigrant guest workers here in the U.S.? What new middle class jobs will be created in the U.S. rather than offshore? The knowledge workers of America are in the same situation as the people traditionally considered "labor". We have been targeted for replacement. We are without realistic career options for continued middle class life. The investment that we have made in education and training is being rendered worthless.

The present outsourcing and worker replacements are tremendous problems which must be resolved by political action. We will not "innovate" ourselves out of these problems. We are looking for leaders who acknowledge the problems, are willing to act, and don't shrink from disingenuous accusations of "protectionism" and "isolationism".

Respectfully,

John Pardon

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[Eight other Ohio white collar workers also signed]