

A Troubled Heartland

A recent study commissioned by the IAM paints a sobering picture of how blue collar America is faring after four years in the crosshairs of an economic revolution.

The good news is that forklift drivers, aircraft builders, toolmakers and machinery operators have not vanished altogether from the North American industrial landscape. But the campaign to send millions of jobs to far away lands has cut deeply into the numbers and confidence of middle class breadwinners.

At no time since the Great Depression have so many citizens looked back rather than forward for a glimpse of greatness, hope and prosperity. Then as now, progress is measured not by what is gained, but by what is not yet lost.

It is too soon to call it despair, but among workers surveyed in Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Washington, the percentage who expect their children to face even greater difficulties when they come into the workforce measured a shocking 68 percent.

More than a quarter of the workers surveyed reported a job loss in their immediate family during the past two years. In Ohio, seventy-five percent of those that found work said they were making less than in their previous job.

The study also revealed a potent political opportunity for Sen. John Kerry to connect at a gut level with the millions of workers struggling to protect themselves and their families.

Voters in any one of the four industrial states examined in the study could swing this election for either candidate. As the IAM's endorsed candidate, we fully expect Sen. Kerry will seize this opportunity.

Complete results of the IAM survey are available online at:

http://www.iamaw.org/publications/pdfs/poll_tables.pdf

