



R. Thomas Buffenbarger  
International President

## Commentary

# The TRADE Act

When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was passed in late 1993, *Newsweek* reported that “union leaders tried to argue that free trade is the source of all lost jobs. But that is largely a blue-collar myth.” Nearly seventeen years later, that “blue-collar myth” is an American reality.

Look around your hometown. Count the number of closed plants. Remember the packed parking lots that now stand empty. And then tell me job-killing free trade deals are a blue-collar myth. Back in 1993, I called it the “North American Fraud & Theft Agreement.” I stand by that statement.

History proved that a massive fraud was perpetrated on the American people. Jobs were not created, but destroyed. Standards of living did not rise, only declined. And workers’ rights were trashed, not enforced.

Instead, we saw the theft – yes, the outright theft – of trillions of dollars worth of assets, assets accumulated over generations. Plants, equipment and production processes were packed up and shipped away. Taxpayer investments in roads, bridges and infrastructure; taxpayer-funded incentives for relocation and property-tax abatements, not to mention the billions sunk into education and skill development; workers’ contributions into pension plans – all were effectively stolen from us.

The past, however, is not prologue. The Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act detailed in this issue of the *IAM Journal* is the work of United States Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Congressman Mike Michaud (D-Maine). Their bill offers us a real chance to reform our egregiously bad trade deals and to prevent future NAFTAs from sailing through Congress.

I urge each member of the IAM to actively support this fair-trade initiative.

*Tom*

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