Who Will Answer the Jobs Question?

by Phyllis Schlafly May 6, 2011

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Public opinion polls show that all the Republican presidential hopefuls are clustered in single- or teen-digit approval ratings. It should be no mystery why no one is breaking out of the pack: no one has answered the number-one political question.

Why did millions of good blue-collar jobs go overseas and what is your plan to restore them? Who and what is responsible for this national disaster?

We now have a combination of 10 percent unemployment, much more chronic underemployment, and heavy personal debt incurred to prepare for jobs that do not exist. Middle-class voters have been badly hurt both by job losses and by stagnation in living standards.

Underemployment has been described by examples in the Wall Street Journal. They include the man who lost his $150,000-a-year job as a money manager and is now making cappuccinos at a Starbucks for $8.85 an hour, and the former manufacturing manager with two master's degrees who is now working as a janitor at $9 an hour after he was turned down for 1,000 other jobs.

Are we losing, or have we already lost, the American middle class, which is the socio-economic factor that long distinguished us from other nations? Whatever happened to the jobs that enabled middle-class men to support a fulltime homemaker taking care of their own children?

This huge voting constituency is up for grabs in 2012. But Republican presidential candidates have failed to offer solutions.

The opportunity is ripe for Republicans because Obama continues to pander to his constituencies who receive government handouts for their living expenses. He even caved in to the feminists' tantrum that he give the majority of Stimulus jobs to women, not to the men who had lost their jobs.

Then he appointed General Electric's CEO Jeffrey Immelt as his jobs czar (director of the Council on Jobs and Competitiveness). As CEO, Immelt reduced the value of GE's stock by half, closed GE's U.S. plants, laid off the workers (including all those who made Edison light bulbs), and by 2010 had 54 percent of GE's employees overseas.

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During the 1990s, U.S. multinationals added workers everywhere on a two-to-one ratio of American to overseas jobs. However, U.S. Commerce Department data show that in the 2000s, U.S. multinationals cut their American work forces by 2.9 million while creating 2.4 million jobs overseas, many of them for high-skilled employees.

In the recession year of 2009, multinationals cut 5.3 percent of their workers in the U.S. and only 1.5 percent of their jobs overseas. Reporters say company executives are very squeamish about revealing or talking about how many of their workers are overseas.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce pointed out that 26 percent of its member companies say they are hurt by China's "indigenous innovation" policies. The Chamber's survey also found that more than half of U.S. companies say that non-Chinese enterprises simply cannot get the same licenses that are given to Chinese companies.

Even the American Chamber of Commerce in China, a big supporter of free trade, is now complaining that China is violating free-trade pledges by limiting market access and shielding its industries from competition. Beijing demands that foreign companies hand over U.S. technology, openly brags that China favors Chinese companies when buying computers and other technology, and orders banks and other companies to limit their use of foreign security products.

The Chinese government is helping local Chinese businesses in technology, energy, aviation and other fields in order to establish Chinese dominance in those fields. The U.S. Chamber says those policies are "a blueprint for technology theft" and force non-Chinese firms to hand over their ideas, patents, trade secrets, and know-how as the price of doing business in China.

Why is anybody surprised? China has a Communist government and is aggressively protectionist.

The American Chamber of Commerce in China's annual White Paper reported that China clearly supports domestic companies at the expense of non-Chinese companies by regulations on "indigenous innovation, licensing, standards, government procurement, competition law, and IP enforcement." These regs, combined with forbidding non-Chinese access to major industries, show that China, despite World Trade Organization membership, has no intention of allowing free and open markets.

Last December, U.S. trade negotiators (who are always outwitted by the Chinese) thought they were getting a promise that Chinese local governments would not be required to buy locally developed technology products and that China would stop using stolen software. There is no evidence that China complied; U.S. negotiators had failed again.

The question that should be asked of all candidates is: Do you support the globalism and free-trade policies that require Americans to compete for jobs with Chinese who work for only 40 cents, or even $2, an hour?