



THIRD WORLD AMERICA

HOW OUR POLITICIANS ARE ABANDONING THE MIDDLE CLASS
AND DESTROYING THE AMERICAN DREAM

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is next." Well, it's been "next" for quite some time now, but it never seems to come to the floor. I often have a nightmare—a common sort—in which I'm stuck in a forest and I can't find my way out. I have a friend whose version is that her feet are stuck to the ground and she can't move. Not a bad description of our leaders' approach to the massive suffering that's going on across America.

A recent study by Duha Tore Altindag and Naci H. Mocan for the National Bureau of Economic Research found that the effects of unemployment can have troubling implications for a political system. The authors studied data from 130,000 people in 69 countries. Their conclusion: "We find that personal joblessness experience translates into negative opinions about the effectiveness of democracy."

No shock there. But it should frighten anyone genuinely concerned about our stability, financial and otherwise—especially since one out of every six blue-collar workers has lost his or her job in the latest recession, a number commensurate with what happened during the Great Depression. Andrew Sum, director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, says, "Our ability to maintain a healthy middle class is very dependent on being able to get a lot of these individuals back into the workplace and back into jobs to keep the rest of the economy going. . . . There are very high multiplier effects from many manufacturing activities. So the loss of jobs spills over into the rest of the economy."

But isn't wringing our hands over the loss of manufacturing jobs the twenty-first-century equivalent to nineteenth-century concerns about America turning from an agrarian society into an industrial one? Isn't America's future to be found in newer, better, more modern service industry jobs?