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The approach we are taking to the financial crisis that hit our country so hard in 2008 has missed one of the things at the heart of that problem. We are spending endless hours wringing our hands about what kind of bailout the economy needs, how much investment bankers should be paid and how many earmarks our lawmakers can hang onto their bailout bills. It seems to me that so much of this is a bunch of macroeconomic nonsense, while there are two basic problems we are almost ignoring. I've written recently about one of these; the incredible loss of common sense that led our financial industry to create and insure millions of bad mortgage loans. The other is just as basic. It is the fact that the job market in our country has gone through a radical change and we must react.

It used to be that an American with basic education but who had good work habits could earn a decent living and retire with a decent pension. My grandfather came to this country in 1888 from Russia, as a not-to- well educated teenager. He could read and write, and because he was young and eager, he pretty quickly learned English. He got a job as a garment worker and he was a very early member of the union in that industry. He and my grandmother had four sons all of whom graduated from college. Two of them served in the armed forces during WWII, but my father was unable to do so because of his asthma. The other uncle was a mathematician who worked on the Manhattan Project. My grandfather retired on a pension created through his union and lived comfortably. But, had he come to the U.S. today he probably could not have found the job that made this story possible. That's majorly because China has figured out how to manufacture a huge proportion of the garments sold in the U.S. which means Grandpa's job no longer exists here.

What I describe is a huge change but it is not a disaster. As I often note, I don't know how long the workers, in China, a Marxist country, are going to sit still working for minimal wages while their bosses become millionaires. And one thing I do know is that there is, and will be, a need in the U.S. for workers who can understand technology, who can grasp how business runs, who can create new things and ideas, and who can operate in the world of 2010. Unfortunately, a kid who has dropped out of school, who uses drugs, and who has no grasp of math, science or literature cannot meet any of these needs. And if kids produce a child, the odds become hugely stacked against them.

If you want to try to assure that your children and grandchildren will be able to seize the opportunities which will be out there in our 21st century world, and if we want to address this challenge there are a few simple steps you can take.

- Make sure your kids stay in school. Tell them every day, "You're going to graduate from high school, from college and from graduate school."
- Encourage them to serve their country in the armed forces or, perhaps, by other means.
- Get involved in their schools.
- Make sure they can read, do math and write well.
- Encourage them to be involved in athletics.
- Teach them that drugs are garbage.
- Make sure they are educated about sex.

This all sounds like social engineering, but, in fact, this is the new economics of the United States.