

Manufacturing Job Losses

NAFTA's impact in Michigan

By WAYNE LUTTON

Car Supply Firm Moves 885 Jobs to Mexico: Johnson Controls to phase out plant in Holland, Michigan

Detroit — The march of manufacturing jobs out of Michigan picked up cadence Monday when automotive supplier Johnson Controls Inc. said it will move its sun visor production from Holland to Mexico, costing some 885 jobs.

Since 2001, Michigan has lost about 150,000 manufacturing jobs....

In January, Swedish appliance maker Electrolux AB announced it will close a refrigerator plant in Greenville, near Grand Rapids, next year and move the operations to Mexico.

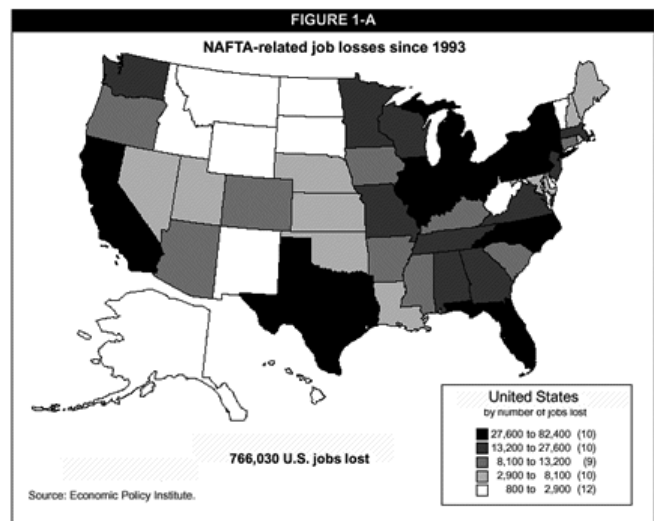
“We examined the business case associated with this and decided this was the right thing to do in support of the business in total,” said Jeff Edwards, group vice president North America at Johnson Controls Automotive Systems Group....

Production is being moved to an existing plant in Ramos Arizpe, Mexico that produces cockpit systems, door panels and other interior trim components for vehicles sold in North America.

Detroit News Business, March 30, 2004, Sec. C, pp. 1-2.

This is just one instance of the negative impact the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has had on employment in the United States. The trilateral pact between Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. was originally announced on December 17, 1992. Bill Clinton became President the next year and the House of Rep-

resentatives approved it on November 17, 1993, 234-200, with 132 Republicans and 102 Democrats voting in favor of it. The Senate then gave NAFTA its approval, 61-38, with 34 Republicans and 27 Democrats voting for it. Clinton signed it into law on December 8, 1993 and it took effect on January 1, 1994.



Today, few Americans realize that under NAFTA, ‘North American Content’ includes items manufactured in Mexico. With Republican and Democratic support, a variety of American manufacturing jobs started shuffling off to Mexico. Greenville, Michigan, once proudly known as the ‘Refrigerator Capital of the World,’ started building Frigidaire products in 1892. Electrolux bought the company in 1986. The Greenville plant was only a year old when its foreign owners announced they could save \$81 million annually by shifting 2,700 jobs from the west Michigan town of 8,460 to Juarez, Mexico. ■