

NAFTA could be good for Mexico, U.S. or both

By Emory Curtis
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NAFTA, which has been with us since 1994, is in full gear now and is setting down its own tracks that points to future trade relations between Mexico and the United States. That change is taking place now. We need to heed it.

In the not too far distant past, the common view of many White Americans was that, except for a precious few, Mexicans were essentially incapable of performing complex tasks. Mexicans have shown those naysayers wrong.

The general view of Americans in terms of Mexico and goods made in Mexico has been negative. In their view, goods made in Mexico were shoddy and cheap, and except for special cases, Mexicans were only good at simple tasks.

A few years ago while looking for a place to buy in Lake County, Calif., a realtor who was also an elected county supervisor, commented to me about a road repair workman up the highway from us, "He is a good workman, even if he is a Mexican. He has been working with that crew for years and they made him lead man. Of course he's got some Chinese in him, and that sharpened him up a bit."

He didn't know it, but that statement made him a sale. Being Black, we bought some property from him because we knew he thought even less of Black people. We felt he needed to see us on a regular basis to maybe "sharpen his view of Black people through us."

That county supervisor's view of Mexicans was held by many and helped U.S. residents stomach a policy that encouraged shipping simple assembly work jobs to maquiladoras on our Mexican border and to support NAFTA which, in effect, paved the way for other jobs to be shipped to Mexico.

The maquiladoras are assembly factories that have special duty-free status. It gives those plants duty-free incoming and outgoing shipments in and out of the country. The duty-free status, proximity to the U.S. market and Mexico's low wage structure makes it a location that can successfully compete with the low-cost assembly operation in Asia.

For many manufacturers, the location decision tipping point is the proximity to the United States, the final destination of most of the assembled goods. That the maquiladora employment has risen to 800,000 since 1993 shows that the program is

valuable—to Mexico, at least. As for the United States, few of those low-wage, low-skill jobs would have ended up in this country. Likely they would have wound up in Asian assembly shops, where most of that kind of work is done now.

On the other hand, because of its proximity to the U.S., it kept many of the higher skill parts manufacturing jobs in this country because of proximity and shipping costs. That proximity to a high-consuming country is also paying off for Mexico in terms of high-skill high-paying assembly jobs too.

Probably the automobile assembly workers are the highest paid and highest skilled set of workers in the U.S. Most U.S. auto assembly plants are only hiring workers with at least some college background now. Auto assembly jobs are becoming more complex and multi-tasked so that workers need to use their brain more and brawn less. Mexico is showing that they have workers with brains too.

In 1985 only 13,647 new passenger cars were imported from Mexico; in 1999, Mexican new passenger car exports to the U.S. totaled almost a million (993,772). Only Japan (1,454,581) and Canada sent more

(1,825,260) new passenger cars to the U.S. than Mexico. Furthermore, the new passenger cars sent to the U.S. from Mexican plants have been climbing each year.

A Electronics factory unit in Guadalajara is an electronic manufacturer for hire. An economist reporter reported that on the shop floor robots were in two lines fitting circuit boards with components in plastic cases.

In an electronic assembly factory, that's a normal sight. However, in this case, the site was abnormal. One line was making Web-TV set top boxes for Phillips and the other line was making the identical set top box for Sony, a competitor of Phillips.

Factories for hire that produce the complete product are a growing concept in the electronic world. The high tech gear needed to assemble the components for the small units—cell phones, video cameras, pagers, etc.—are robots because the components are too small even for the small fingers of women who normally do that work.

Complex and costly robots have replaced the line of women soldering parts on a circuit board. Robots are complex and costly and need

specialists to operate and maintain them.

Factory operations include reprogramming the robots to fit changes in product design, and to make it more producible. Factories for hire are speedy producers. Manufacturers like them because speedy production gives a company a market place lead over its competitors.

The workers in those plants are very skilled. They

even give advice on design changes to speed the manufacturing process. Speed to market is the key. Manufacturers know Mexicans are meeting that goal. It shows once again that no group, no race, no nation has a lock on knowledge and the ability to manage intellect.

Adjusting to a next-door neighbor with low wages and ability to compete will be hard for us. But that's our future.

Powell

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two sides issued warnings that hinted at more bloodshed.

The Palestinian message amounts to a plea to the Bush administration to play a more aggressive role.

Referring to Israel's economic pressure on the Palestinians, including curbs on their travel, Rahman said Shaath's letter stated: "The state of siege is not the proper climate for calm."

"We both can engage in confidence-building measures with the Mitchell Commission report," the letter said. The administration gave no indication it would change course.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said: "We're consistently urging the parties to take the steps that could lead to implementation of the Mitchell Commission report."

"We're always considering what more we can do. We're always considering how to move this process forward. But we're always aware of the fact that it takes the parties to make the decisions, it takes the parties to cooperate to establish security that works for both of them," the U.S. spokesman said.

Alliance

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Morse Arberry; Ida Gaines, aide to Senator Harry Reid; Chief Joey T. Tillmon, North Las Vegas Police Department; Frank Dixon, State of Nevada Adult Parole and Probation Department; Kirby Burgess, Director of Clark County Family and Court Services, and Autumn Keys-Ita, Site Administrator, A.D. Guy Center.

What is the Minister's Alliance of Southern Nevada?

For years nearly 20 years, MAASN been quietly helping people in the community get jobs, heal marriages and recover from addictions.

The 52 member Minister's Alliance Association of Southern Nevada has formed partnerships with CCSN, the Culinary Union Training Center, WorkSource of Southern Nevada and several of the city's top hotels.

Their goal is to reach the unemployed, people who are difficult to employ and those that are under-employed.

Clients receive vocational testing, help with resume preparation and interview training. Job coaching is also available.

MAASN likes to boast that individuals referred to a company for job placement are job-ready, work acclimated and have positive attitudes.

The Rev. Willie Davis, president of MAASN, is particularly proud of alliances formed with North Las Vegas Judge Warren Vanlandschoot and other judges in the city.

Those alliances help clients who are afraid to apply for work because they have outstanding bench warrants for minor violations. They are granted amnesty by the courts, which frees them to join the workforce.

After they get a job, they pay the fine.

The Bellagio was one of the hotels that came to MAASN when it needed employees, Davis said.

The hotels are confident that employees prepared for work by MAASN will be "job ready." They will have positive attitudes, be punctual and perform well on the job, said Davis.

MAASN doesn't need much media coverage to get the word out about their programs. The 52 pastors who are members of MAASN put the word out from their pulpits. The referrals come from church members and others in the community, Davis said.

Job placement is not the only service offered by MAASN.

Some of the other services provided include parenting, marriage and family training, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, DUI counseling, anxiety and depression counseling, pre-trial release counseling, and GED preparation. All of the counselors are state certified.

All of the services available through MAASN will be available to the inmates living in the halfway houses. MAASN's services are available at the A.D. Guy Community Center, 817 North N Street.

CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ADULT HIGH SCHOOL



Adult Education Programs are open to anyone 17 years of age or older who does not have a high school diploma. Classes in all academic areas required for graduation, as well as occupational classes for career training are offered tuition free to eligible students. Students enrolled in regular high schools, ages 17 and older, who are credit deficient may enroll but should contact their high school counselor for advisement and admission. Additionally the program operates a full service GED testing center. Interested students should contact a counselor at one of the following times and locations to register for classes.

Registration Opens August 13

Classes Begin September 4

Registration Locations

St. Louis Site

2701 East St. Louis Avenue, Las Vegas, 89104

Monday-Thursday: 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Friday: 8:00 AM-5:00 PM

799-8630 Ext. 331

Rancho High School

1900 E. Owens, N. Las Vegas, NV 89030

Room 160

4:30 PM - 8:30 PM (Monday through Thursday)

Phone: 799-7000 Ext. 315

Garside Middle School

300 S. Torrey Pines, Las Vegas, NV 89107

Room 805

4:30 PM - 8:30 PM (Monday through Thursday)

Phone: 799-4245 Ext. 208