

John Ratzenberger Speaks Out About Rebuilding America



Recent Articles and Interviews in the Media

Center for America

Contents

Investors Business Daily	4
The Oklahoman	6
Hugh Hewitt National Radio Show	7
Milwaukee Business Journal	8
Atlanta Business Chronicle	9
AOL News.....	10
Letter from John Ratzenberger.....	11

Media Contact for John Ratzenberger

Todd Young, 770-317-2423 or todd@dminews.com.

Center for America

CFA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose programs bring people face to face with issues that affect the future quality of life, economic prosperity and freedom in America.

CFA offers a wide range of learning programs and knowledge resources about ways people can get involved to help solve America's problems.

For more information, please contact, Todd Young, Chief Operating Officer at 770-317-2423 or todd@dminews.com.

Center for America
250 Willow Springs Drive
Roswell, GA 30075 770-317-2423

www.CenterForAmerica.org

© 2010 Center for America.

All rights reserved.

John Ratzenberger: “Let’s Rebuild America!”



As measured by total box office receipts, John Ratzenberger is the 6th most successful actor of all time. His ten years performing in over 28 films in Europe and his 15 year association with Pixar studios has yielded a total of more than \$3 billion for projects featuring the well known actor. John is the only actor to have voiced a character in every Pixar movie since *Toy Story* 15 years ago.

John produced and hosted 97 episodes of “*Made in America*” for the Travel Channel. This featured the enterprise of American entrepreneurs across the country. It established television precedent and led the way for a new series of shows including: “*Dirty Jobs*”; “*Deadliest Catch*”; “*Ice Road Truckers*”; and more. These celebrate the American work ethic.

While visiting factories that in John’s words, “provide the backbone of our civilization”, he learned that the average age of skilled manufacturing workers is about 55 years old. John realized that the essential workforce necessary for our infrastructure and very existence of our civilization will disappear within six to ten years. John is taking the lead in a national public awareness campaign to mobilize Americans to rebuild our skilled work force through local and national initiatives.

Earlier in his career, John founded Eco Pak Industries, a company that developed and manufactured packaging alternatives made from biodegradable and non-toxic recycled paper as a safe alternative to Styrofoam “peanuts” and plastic bubble wrap. John sold the company in 1999 and since then, it has grown to five manufacturing plants and the product is used worldwide.

John is on the boards of Pepperdine and Sacred Heart Universities and is the recipient of two honorary Doctorate degrees. He coauthored *We’ve Got it Made in America: A Common Man’s Salute to an Uncommon Country*, which was published by Time Warner.

John is best known for playing mail carrier Cliff Clavin on the sitcom *Cheers*. Cliff and Norm, the primary customer characters, became iconic bar buddies. *Cheers* won 28 Emmy Awards, ran for 11 years and gone down in television history as one of the most successful sitcoms in history.

Born in Bridgeport Connecticut, the son of a factory worker and truck driver, early in his life John earned a living as a carpenter framing houses throughout New England.

Investor's Business Daily

Help Wanted: Skilled Workers Need Apply

By JOHN RATZENBERGER

June 29, 2010

When did “blue collar” become a dirty word in America? Right about the same time America gave up its position as the world’s producer and instead became the world’s most conspicuous consumer.

That’s not to bash free enterprise; we need to purchase and consume. But this cultural shift has created an “industrial tsunami” that threatens our free enterprise system.

America faces a crisis of epic proportions. The U.S. Department of Labor forecasts that by 2012, there will be a shortfall of nearly 3 million skilled worker positions in America. The average age of skilled workers in many trades is 54-56 years old, and as this veteran group retires, there are not enough trained workers to replace them. Today’s shortage sharply reduces the growth of U.S. gross domestic product — certainly not a help in the current economy.

As I’ve traveled the nation and met with business owners, I hear the same story. Employers are desperate for skilled workers to fill essential jobs. Many say privately that their companies may have to close or move operations to another country because of this shortage — despite the offer of good pay and benefits. We’re experiencing the loss of the once-vaunted production edge that America enjoyed.

A few examples bring this to light. Our country’s infrastructure requires major upgrades and repairs. Municipal water and sewer systems are failing, and many bridges

and overpasses are unsafe. Yet, the nationwide shortfall of 500,000 welders is causing huge delays or cancellations for funded repair projects.

Heavy construction equipment, such as cranes, must be built in America to meet the demand. Finding the skilled workers to build cranes is a major hurdle. Once built, a crane requires skilled operators, as well as skilled repair and maintenance workers to keep the cranes operating. This scenario is typical of virtually every industrial enterprise in the nation.

From aviation to energy, the skilled worker gaps are enormous. This has dangerous implications for our national security. To maintain the world’s most sophisticated military, we must produce systems, parts and hardware in America. Without domestic manufacturing operations, critical component work has been moved offshore as a stopgap measure.

Negative media images of skilled workers — what I call “essential workers” — pervade our culture. Educators, employers and community leaders are slowly becoming engaged in efforts to counter this dangerous trend that glamorizes “celebrity” and “corporate” living at the expense of skilled trades that offer a good living to those who choose to work with their hands and minds.



Truth is, high-profile athletes and entertainers are nonessential. If all the celebrities like me disappeared overnight, it would be sad, but the world would continue with little disruption. But if plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters, lathe operators, truck drivers and other “essentials” disappeared, our country would grind to a halt.

By encouraging skilled trades and people working with their hands, we are also fostering the kind of innovation that leads to a “better mousetrap.” Before becoming an actor, I worked as a carpenter and always tinkered with better ways to do things. I started Eco Pak Industries, a company that developed and manufactured packaging alternatives made from biodegradable and nontoxic recycled paper as an alternative to Styrofoam “peanuts” and plastic bubble wrap. In the mid-’90s, I sold the company, and it’s now grown to five manufacturing plants providing the product worldwide.

We must mobilize the public to restore the dignity of essential skilled workers. We must restore industrial arts programs in American schools to provide opportunities for young people in greater numbers to build careers

building the things Americans need.

The good news is that there are successful national and local initiatives working to address this crisis. One of my recent visits was to Bradley Tech, a Milwaukee-based high school that has four academies, each mentored by a sponsor company.



Bradley Tech provides hands-on education that encourages skilled trades. Reaching the next generation of young people, with much-needed programs like this, is the key to a sustainable Great American Recovery.

The lens through which I view the world is simple: The manual arts always take precedence over the fine arts. Remember, someone had to build the ceiling before Michelangelo could go to work.

Sign-up for Email Newsletter About the Industrial Tsunami Campaign:

www.CenterForAmerica.org

The Oklahoman

Skilled workers key to state, national economies

BY JOHN RATZENBERGER

July 31, 2010

A cultural shift has taken place in America that's tragically made the skilled worker a thing of the past. Our media has glorified celebrity at the expense of our nation's basic needs, and America will reap the whirlwind within the next two decades. At stake is nothing less than our long-term economic vitality and national security.

Let's start with infrastructure — bridges, roads, water and sewer systems. America is dangerously close to failures that will result in loss of life and are already resulting in loss of economic competitiveness. In many cases, currently funded infrastructure projects cannot move forward due to lack of skilled workers. For example, a national shortage of 500,000 welders has resulted in delays or cancellations of many key projects.



Expand that out over the entire economy and we have a massive crisis on our hands. By 2012, there will be a 3 million skilled worker

shortfall in our nation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. In Oklahoma, which has had solid energy and manufacturing industries, top companies have difficulty finding adequate skilled workers to fill positions.

The average age of American skilled workers is 55, which means the bulk of our skilled worker base will retire in the next decade. There are not enough skilled workers to replace them and maintain the nation's competitive global position.

In my interviews with employers across the nation, I hear the same story: Business owners are desperate for skilled workers. Many are reaching out to local schools to attract young people into the trades. Despite the offer of good pay and benefits, the noble skills that involve working with your hands and mind don't hold the same appeal as they did in decades past. Some businesses are considering moving their operations (and jobs) overseas. We're experiencing the loss of the once-vaunted edge that America enjoyed.

From aviation to energy, our national security is at risk. In order to maintain the world's most sophisticated military, we must produce systems, parts and hardware in America. Without domestic manufacturing operations, critical component work has been moved offshore as a stop-gap measure.

The lens through which I view the world is simple: The manual arts always take precedence over the fine arts. Remember, someone had to build the ceiling before Michelangelo could go to work.

Negative images of skilled workers — what I call "essential workers" — pervade

our culture. The truth is, high-profile athletes and entertainers are non-essential. If all the celebrities like me disappeared overnight, it would be sad, but the world would continue with little disruption. But if plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters, lathe operators, truck drivers and other "essentials" disappeared, our country would grind to a halt.



We must mobilize the public to restore the dignity of essential skilled workers. We must restore industrial arts programs in our schools to provide opportunities for young people to build careers building the things Americans need. Reaching the next generation of young people is the key to a sustainable great American recovery.

John Ratzenberger Interview on Hugh Hewitt's National Radio Show



Salem Radio Network's Hugh Hewitt interviewed John Ratzenberger on his national radio show about John's new television documentary, "*Industrial Tsunami*" and his visit to the Bradley Tech school in Milwaukee, a model for the nation of vocational education for high school students.

John was the guest speaker at a meeting of community leaders sponsored by The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation of Milwaukee. His message: America needs to restore the dignity of "essential workers" and expand opportunities for industrial arts training for young people so we don't lose our manufacturing base.

www.CenterForAmerica.org

Blog: Milwaukee BizTalk.Rich Rovito

Reporter Actor Ratzenberger tours Bradley Tech. Thursday, June 24, 2010

Actor John Ratzenberger, best known for his role as pretentious blowhard Cliff Clavin on the sitcom “Cheers,” spent Thursday morning in Milwaukee discussing the importance of career opportunities in the skilled trades and the projected shortages of qualified skilled laborers.

Ratzenberger toured Bradley Tech High School in Milwaukee after attending a private breakfast hosted by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. The foundation has a long history of support to Bradley Tech in honor of Lynde and Harry Bradley.

Ratzenberger is a long-time proponent of preparing young people for well-paid, fulfilling jobs that require hands-on skills. He produced and hosted the series “Made in America” which showcases the legacy of American manufacturing and the workers whom he considers to be the backbone of the U.S. economy.

Ratzenberger believes that a new emphasis on skilled trades can build individual success while reshaping the ideals of civic pride, work ethic and community involvement.

During his visit to Bradley Tech, Ratzenberger was scheduled to observe a student construction project and tour a facility where students receive training for plumbing, electricity, robotics and carpentry.



Photo: Joanne S. Lawton | Washington Business Journal



Skilled workers: Our 'industrial tsunami'

BY JOHN RATZENBERGER

August 20, 2010

Ratzenberger is an actor, producer, inventor and entrepreneur whose cable television series, "John Ratzenberger's 'Made in America'" and his in-production documentary "Industrial Tsunami" showed him first-hand how the shortage of essential skilled workers threatens America's future.

A cultural shift has taken place in America that's tragically made the skilled worker a thing of the past. Our media has glorified celebrity at the expense of our basic needs, and America will reap the whirlwind within the next two decades. At stake is nothing less than our long-term economic vitality and national security.

Let's start with infrastructure. America is dangerously close to failures that will result in loss of life and are already resulting in loss of economic competitiveness. In many cases, currently funded infrastructure projects cannot move forward due to lack of skilled workers.

By 2012, there will be a 3 million skilled worker shortfall in our nation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. In Georgia, top companies cannot find adequate skilled workers to fill positions. The bulk of our existing skilled worker base will retire in the next decade.

In interviews across the nation, I hear the same story. Business owners are desperate for skilled workers. Despite the offer of good pay and benefits, the noble skills that involve working with your hands and mind do not hold the same appeal they did in decades past. From aviation to energy, our national security is at risk. In order to maintain the world's most sophisticated military, we must produce systems, parts and hardware in America.

The lens through which I view the world is simple: the manual arts always take precedence over the fine arts. Remember, someone had to build the ceiling before Michelangelo could go to work.

Negative media images of skilled workers – what I call “essential workers” – pervade our culture. The truth is, high-profile athletes and entertainers are non-essential. If all the celebrities like me disappeared overnight, it would be sad, but the world would continue with little disruption. If, however, plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters, lathe operators, truck drivers, and other “essentials” disappeared, our country would grind to a halt.

We must mobilize the public to restore the dignity of essential skilled workers. We must restore industrial arts programs in American schools to provide opportunities for young people to build careers building the things Americans need. Reaching the next generation of young people is the key to a sustainable Great American Recovery.

AOL News • Opinion: We Need More Skilled Workers

John Ratzenberger

Special to AOL News

September 2, 2010

When America gave up its position as the producer-in-chief and became the consumer-in-chief, “essential skilled workers” became dirty words in our lexicon.

The cultural shift is fast producing an “industrial tsunami” that threatens our economy and way of life. Ironically enough, we’re facing a crisis shortage of skilled workers at a time of dramatically high unemployment.

We must re-connect this disconnect or face the consequences. America works when Americans are working.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 25 percent of the working population will reach retirement age by 2012, resulting in a potential shortage of nearly 10 million skilled workers. This heightens the price our nation is paying for dismantling so many in-school vocational training programs during the past few decades.

The current shortage already sharply reduces the growth of U.S. gross domestic product, contributing to our overall economic problem. America’s infrastructure is falling apart before our eyes. Municipal water and sewer systems are failing, and more bridges are unsafe to cross. Yet the nationwide shortfall of more than 500,000 welders is causing already-funded repair projects to be canceled or delayed.

Essential skilled workers are heroes. Without them, America grinds to a halt. But there are national security implications to this

skilled worker gap, too. The ongoing demand for U.S.-manufactured military parts and hardware -- from boots to mother boards -- require domestic manufacturing operations. Even now, critical manufacturing has been moved off-shore as a stop-gap measure.

We simply can’t “outsource” our national defense!

Along with Emmy Award-winning producer Craig Haffner and the Center for America, I am currently in pre-production with a new documentary, “Industrial Tsunami,” whose purpose is to wake up Americans to the shortage of skilled workers that threatens the existence of companies and entire industries.

We must develop short- and long-range solutions to this crisis, starting with expanding vocational training opportunities and restoring dignity and pride in America’s skilled workers.

We will explore the negative media images of skilled workers, as well as current initiatives at the national and local levels to address this crisis.

Equally important, we will promote the concept that essential skilled work is noble, is useful and creates the independent mindset and self-confidence in the individual that has resonated throughout our nation’s history -- and can rebuild America with a solid foundation once again.

John Ratzenberger is an actor, entrepreneur and advocate for vocational training and skilled workers. He is in pre-production on a new documentary, “Industrial Tsunami,” due in early 2011.

John Ratzenberger

To: Community Leaders

While producing the 97 episodes of *John Ratzenberger's Made in America* for the Travel Channel, I learned from dozens of factory owners that one of their biggest problems is how to stay in business when so few young Americans are capable of, or interested in, working with their hands.

The upcoming retirement in a few years of millions of skilled workers, whose expertise in building things is not being passed along to younger generations, threatens the collapse of our manufacturing economy and with it, our middle class. Many companies already face serious worker shortages.

Looking ahead, it is clear that America cannot maintain a successful economy without rebuilding the skilled workforce. This means that we must reintroduce our young people to the joys of building things with their hands and to sustainable careers in the skilled trades. This is why I've started the Industrial Tsunami campaign.

We need young people to experience the wonders of tinkering and building things. We need to restore industrial arts programs during and after school hours. We need to educate guidance counselors about opportunities in the skilled trades for high paying and rewarding jobs. We need to educate parents that not every young person needs to go to college. We need to get the media to stop demonizing "blue collar workers" in television programs and movies.

In support of our Industrial Tsunami television documentary and the educational resources on our campaign website, I'll be speaking out through radio and television interviews, op-ed articles, and speeches around the country.

I hope you will contribute financially and through your leadership to this campaign. I would enjoy learning about the local and national vocational programs for young people your company supports, and to have your ideas and suggestions as well.

Regards,

John



Watch John's Milwaukee Presentation:
www.CenterForAmerica.org