



By Joseph L. Arvin and  
Scott A. Newton

[www.anationonborrowedtime.com](http://www.anationonborrowedtime.com)

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A recent USA Today front-page story—"The New Ghost Towns"—talks about the growing number of small towns across the country that, due to job losses in manufacturing, are becoming virtual ghost towns, with one 21st Century difference—most of the people still live there. The common thread running through these towns' plight is the same—major manufacturing company offshores jobs and eventually closes the facility, throwing most of the citizens out of work. But unlike in earlier downtimes, there is no option of "moving to where the jobs are," because there are practically no jobs—certainly not in manufacturing.

This is mentioned merely to make the point that there really are no new revelations in "A Nation on Borrowed Time," by Joseph L. Arvin, president of Arrow Gear Company and Scott A. Newton, president of APEX Media Solutions.

But this is must reading.

The authors devote three of the five chapters to highlighting the ongoing deterioration of the American industrial base and the economic and social ills that accompany it. They document how, beginning in the 1970s, the out-sourcing of skilled manufacturing jobs to rebuilding countries like Japan or developing countries such as China was the Trojan Horse that began the long, sustained attack on the American middle class workforce that continues today.

That offshoring of good jobs, as

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By Jack McGuinn, Senior Editor

the authors stress, has led to a severe depletion of national wealth, which impacts workers (pay), businesses (profits) and government (tax base). Put another way, by exporting what were once family-supporting, community-sustaining jobs—jobs that paid mortgages and taxes, bought automobiles, put kids through school, etc.—we are in fact exporting the nation's wealth in the bargain while enriching others'.

A highlight of this book is that the information is presented in a very concise, straightforward and, yes, heartfelt manner.

Given Arvin's background, a major goal of his efforts here is to determine the "root cause" and "corrective action" of this economic/societal malaise. Arvin calls out fellow manufacturers regarding their own culpability: "American-owned manufacturing has done very well, American-based manufacturing is now a shell of what it once was."

The authors also point out how—due to job loss—the shrinking tax base, especially at local levels, is seriously impacting education funding for even the most basic needs.

All of this, according to Arvin and Newton, is just one set of examples of how we have, seemingly willfully, depleted our collective wealth in the enrichment of our trading "partners." And the technology transfers that have been going on for decades since the post-WWII Marshall Plan and continue to this day—like the training of Chinese CNC operators, for instance, is yet another example.

So, as Chapter Four asks, "What Can be Done?" In a nutshell—the

answer is the power of manufacturing, high-end manufacturing, and all the value added benefits that flow from it.

Another problem for the American economy and well-being is apathy.

"Conveying this message and reaching those who agree with its content is only a first step," say the authors. "If these concepts go no further than the pages of this publication, these proposals for corrective actions will have no chance of being implemented."

Just how this industrialist renaissance will occur remains in doubt. The authors mention the usual things U.S. manufacturers seek—meaningful federal and local tax breaks, incentives, monetary reforms and a truly fair playing field for international trade.

Last—and perhaps of most importance—is education. In this era of inflated student grades belied by declining math and science scores, declining numbers of engineering students and very little leadership from the usual suspects—the U.S. Congress—it is hard to imagine improvement anytime soon.

The greatest praise to be directed toward the authors of this book is respectful gratitude for their taking the time to write it. The impending, decades-in-the-making train wreck that is the gutting of the middle class and all that entails is happening in plain sight. And like the weather, we all talk about it as if nothing can be done, as if it were an approaching mammoth meteor. *A Nation on Borrowed Time* proves otherwise. ⚙