

Another NAFTA nail is about to be hammered into the coffin Washington is building for the US economy. Within the next few days our borders will be opened to the Mexican trucking industry in an unprecedented way. A "pilot" program is starting which will allow trucks from Mexico to haul goods beyond the 25 mile buffer zone to any point in the United States. Officials claim this is being done with utmost oversight, but Americans still have their legitimate concerns. Rather than securing our borders, we seem to be providing more pores for illegal aliens, drug dealers, and terrorists to permeate. Not only that, but the anti-competitive and burdensome yoke of over-regulation of our industry at home is about to send a lot more Americans to the unemployment lines. The American Trucking industry has been heavily regulated since 1935. The express purpose of The Motor Carrier Act was to eliminate competition through permitting, regulating tariff rates, even approving routes. American trucking companies have been fighting ever since for some relief from the substantial regulatory burdens placed on them. Regulatory compliance is the single most daunting barrier to entry, and eats up huge amounts of profit. Now, to add insult to injury, Mexican trucking companies, not subject to the same onerous standards, will be allowed to roll right in and squeeze American industry further. This will severely undermine the ability of American trucking companies to remain solvent. The fact that this is being done in the name of free trade is disturbing. Free trade is not complicated, yet NAFTA and CAFTA are comprised of thousands of pages of complicated legal jargon. All free trade really needs is two words: Low tariffs. Free trade does not require coordination with another government to benefit citizens here. Just like domestic businesses don't pay taxes, foreign businesses do not pay tariffs – consumers do, in the form of higher prices. If foreign governments want to hurt their own citizens with protectionist tariffs, let them. But let us set a good example here, and show the world an honest example of true free trade. And let us stop hurting American workers with mountains of red tape in the name of safety. Safety standards should be set privately, by the industry and by the insurance companies who have the correct motivating factors to do so. Free trade is not the problem, and pseudo free trade is what is being offered in the wrongly named North American Free Trade Agreement and all its offshoots. The problem is a government-managed economy and the burdensome regulation that results. For our economy to remain competitive in the world, we must remember what it is to be truly free. We must lift the regulatory shackles threatening to sink our industries into oblivion. Free trade begins with freedom domestically, and we can't afford to lose that.