

Worth of Regulations Questioned

HIGH COSTS of federal regulations should be apparent to Oklahomans by now. If not, they soon will be, due to threatened loss of jobs and higher prices on what we buy, in addition to taxes we pay.

Between 2,000 and 6,000 Oklahoma City workers are in danger of losing their jobs as a result of threatened closing of several meat packing plants. Packers say they can't afford huge sewer bills needed by the city to pay for sewage equipment required by regulations.

Federal strip-mining regulations that went into effect this month have increased costs of mining coal in the state. Officials say 40 or more independent mining companies may be forced to close down.

Federal regulations require grain elevators to remove grain dust (powdered wheat) to keep it out of the air. Experts say the new rules increase dangers of grain dust explosions.

Farm organizations claim that Department of Labor standards for control of cotton dust will cost farmers, consumers and the textile in-

dustry more than \$2.5 billion, although not a single case of byssinosis has ever been diagnosed as a result of exposure to cotton dust.

Besides, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules for employee training and medical surveillance are expected to force closing of some of the 90 cotton gins left in the state. This will further weaken cotton as a major Oklahoma crop.

An article in *Financier* magazine (Oct. 1978) estimated the 1977 cost of regulation at \$100 billion. This is equivalent to nearly three-quarters of the annual private investment in plants and equipment. Other estimates are much higher.

Major government requirements designed to increase safety, fuel economy and damage resistance of automobiles will add about \$285 to the price of a passenger car by 1984, the Transportation Department has said. Inflation and higher wage rates will be extra.

That's the "bad news." The "good news" is we might not have to worry about that. The Environmental Pro-

tection Agency and Department of Energy may have us all walking or riding buses before then, anyway.

As it is, EPA has power to shut down construction of all new businesses unless metropolitan areas meet unrealistic air quality standards by the middle of this year.

In November, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that on-the-job fatalities among employers with 11 or more workers were 20 percent higher in 1977 than in 1976.

Special Trade Representative Robert S. Strauss has attacked cost-effectiveness of EPA rules and advised the agency to find ways less costly to business to achieve its goals.

Douglas M. Costle, EPA administrator, has admitted impact of regulations on inflation is "minimal but growing." He argues that benefits exceed costs and that the public wants those benefits and is willing to pay for them.

Chances are, we haven't seen anything yet in the effect of federal regulations like what is about to happen to us!