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MAY 3 1979

# Regulatory Revolt May Be Coming

**A**MERICANS generally have seemed to be either uninformed or apathetic to the fastest-growing area of government — regulations.

But businessmen appear to be waking up and warnings of the regulatory peril are being heard and seen with more frequency.

Perhaps one of the "awakeners" was a nationwide poll by Opinion Research Corp. last fall. It reported that 43 percent said there should be less regulation, 25 percent said there should be more regulation, and 23 percent said there is just enough as it is.

In a March issue, Newsweek discussed problems and costs of regulations, then added: "Still, no one in Washington — and few in the private sector — believes in a wholesale rollback in government regulations." There are signs of stronger opposition, nevertheless.

"I like the tax revolt, as exemplified by Proposition 13 in California," said Dr. Murray L. Weidenbaum, director of the Center for the Study of American Business, Washington University, St. Louis, "be-

cause the regulatory revolt comes next."

"Regulations cost American business an estimated \$102 billion a year, about \$30 billion of it in mountains of paperwork," said Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton, D-Mo, who has not been known as a conservative.

"Every dollar spent by federal agencies in the regulation process causes business and industry to spend an additional \$20," says Allan Grant, president of American Farm Bureau Federation.

"Government overregulation doesn't dampen inflation; it fuels it," says Gould, Inc., Chicago firm, in a current advertisement.

Speaking to an Oklahoma City civic group recently, Clifford M. Hardin, vice chairman of the board and director of corporate research at Ralston Purina, St. Louis, described the dangers of "mushrooming growth" of federal regulations.

"While paperwork and red tape are expensive nuisances, the real concerns are far more fundamental and far more serious," Dr. Hardin said. "They are adding to the costs

of consumer goods. Even more importantly, they are a damper on innovation. They delay or make impossible the introduction of new products with limited potential simply because prospective profits would not pay for the cost of obtaining federal approval."

It is obvious that government agencies are taking over responsibilities of free enterprise by defining product standards and services. This can stifle competition and discourage quality by forcing all companies to adopt theoretical, mediocre standards.

"Some regulatory agencies don't always know how much their regulations will cost," Douglas M. Costle, chairman of the federal Regulatory Council, admitted in a published interview. "Fewer can clearly define the benefits they expect from their regulations."

"Government regulations are like cockroaches in the flour bin," quips Dr. Earl L. Butz, former secretary of agriculture. "It's not what they eat; it's what they mess up!"

The American Revolution of 1776 was a "regulatory revolt."