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Federal Regulations Not Paying Off

WHILE bureaucrats in Washington delay construction of Central Expressway by insisting on impractical and possibly illegal social programs, the cost of building the "freeway" is going up more than \$100,000 a day.

This should bring home to us the costly aspects of over-regulation. Estimates that federal rules require outlays exceeding \$100 billion a year may be too big for us to assimilate. Non-governmental studies calculate costs even higher, at about \$1,000 per person annually. We pay whether we understand the figures or not.

The Interstate Commerce Commission was the first regulatory agency. It was created in 1887 to set railroad rates and issue licenses. Now we have around 100 bureaus and agencies, employing more than 100,000 people to write and implement about 7,000 rules each year, filling 75,000 pages in The Federal Register.

The trouble began when Congress delegated legislative powers to allow these agencies to draft regula-

tions that have the full effect of law. Those who write them are not subject to election or recall.

Those who argue whether the United States is a democracy or a republic are missing the point. Nowadays government is by bureaucracy.

Oklahoma's coal industry is combating a federal takeover by an agency that rejects the adequacy of state regulations. The meat packing industry is threatened with shutdown because of federal sewer requirements. New manufacturing plants have been stalled by air pollution rules.

Cotton gins have been directed to install equipment costing \$180,000 each to control cotton dust even though there never has been a case of byssinosis traced to this cause.

Grain elevators have been directed to install costly dust collectors that operators say increase the danger of grain dust explosions.

The list is long and the lack of support for such regulations does not bother the regulators. They do not have to stand for re-election and

the public has no opportunity to vote on their rules.

"Federal regulation is often called inflationary, irritating, costly and even farcical," says an article in Nation's Business. "But that's not the worst that can be said of it. The worst is that it isn't working." The writer said that despite billions of dollars spent on regulations there is "surprisingly little evidence that the world is any better off than it would have been without federal tinkering."

The public must pay the cost of regulations whether they are beneficial or not. Increased costs are relayed to the public by overburdened manufacturers and service companies, and these may be referred to as inflation costs.

One of the few encouraging developments on the horizon is the effort being made by Sen. David Boren, D-Okla., and others to give Congress veto power over future regulations.

However, positive action will be needed by Congress to eliminate most of the regulatory agencies and cut out unnecessary rules.