

Exporting Raw Materials Costs Jobs

INTERNATIONAL trade reports tell about agricultural exports and oil imports but they never show how many jobs we are exporting.

It is one thing to ship finished products abroad. It is something else to export raw materials, because it means someone else will convert them into profitable merchandise.

It is even worse to manage our affairs so that we buy back finished products made from our own materials. This is exporting jobs at the expense of our own economy and our own people.

Because Oklahoma was developed after surrounding states were populated and operating, we always have exported as raw materials most of our wheat, cotton, peanuts, cattle and hides, oil, gas and other resources. It is easier to ship raw materials and buy elsewhere than it is to develop "homegrown industries" to provide local jobs.

Recently, a utility firm expressed interest in helping to develop Oklahoma industries. After considering several suggestions, projects were

selected for further action. Agribusiness, the Oklahoma industry that could exploit our raw materials, was, in the words of a company spokesman, "put on the back burner." People they talked to didn't have the vision, finances or interest to tackle this one.

Exportation of jobs is not just an Oklahoma practice. It is being done nationally because of deliberate policies of the federal government, cost pressures exerted by union labor, poor work attitudes of employees, and by businesses seeking lower cost labor.

"There is something wrong when American workers are laid off and the Japanese are working overtime," Lee A. Iacocca, chairman of the board of the floundering Chrysler Corp., said recently.

Local counters and racks are stacked with merchandise bearing tags of origin from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Brazil and South Korea. These countries have been given more than \$4 billion in special U.S. tariff exemptions created to help developing countries.

Many economists and other experts have sought to analyze causes of our loss of leadership in productivity.

One survey showed that at least half of the American public is dissatisfied with American products and considers foreign-made products to be just as good, if not better.

Business executives frequently blame government and industry for failure to invest more money in product research and development. They also criticize tax laws that discourage investment and expansion.

A campaign to revitalize American industry through a program called "reindustrialization" has not really caught on because social reformers have latched onto it as a vehicle to make government more intrusive into free enterprise, rather than less.

Government cannot be relied upon to revitalize industry or increase productivity. Politics cannot be counted upon to solve business problems because politicians are looking for votes; not profits.