

Trade agreement dubious victory

Japan and the United States both say they won something in the automobile-trade fracas settled last week, just before a deadline that would have put a 100-percent U.S. tariff on Japanese-manufactured luxury cars.

Well, at least our president didn't throw up on their president.

As many may recall, former President George Bush went to Tokyo in 1992 to try and create some trade flexibility in the Japanese auto industry. Instead, Bush became ill at a fancy state dinner — and returned to the United States without an agreement.

This new agreement comes after some 20 years of the United States battling with Japan over its rigid auto-trade barriers.

The United States has complained over the years that Japanese auto makers and their suppliers have frozen American parts manufacturers out of the Japanese market while limiting sales of U.S.-made parts to Japanese assembly plants in America. This translates into all kinds of numbers and statistics that favor the Japanese auto industry. While 80 percent of American car dealers sell foreign cars, only 7 percent of Japanese dealers sell non-Japanese cars.

But that argument brings up an entirely different argument. One quick look at any *Consumer Reports* magazine will show that Japanese cars are more reliable and are better across the board than their American counterparts. U.S. auto makers have made some incredible advances, but still have room for improvement.

Looking at political statistics, the recent TV ads featuring a confident Clinton prove that the president is positioning himself for a reelection bid, and he needs any and all of the victories he can get.

But, was this agreement really a "victory" for the U.S. automobile market, as much as it was a political win for Clinton?

Basically, Japan has agreed to increase its purchases of American car parts by nearly \$9 billion over the next three years.

While Japanese auto manufacturers gave specific plans to deal more with American cars and parts, international trade watchdogs don't give much hope for the agreement because past agreements have not been fully honored by either country.

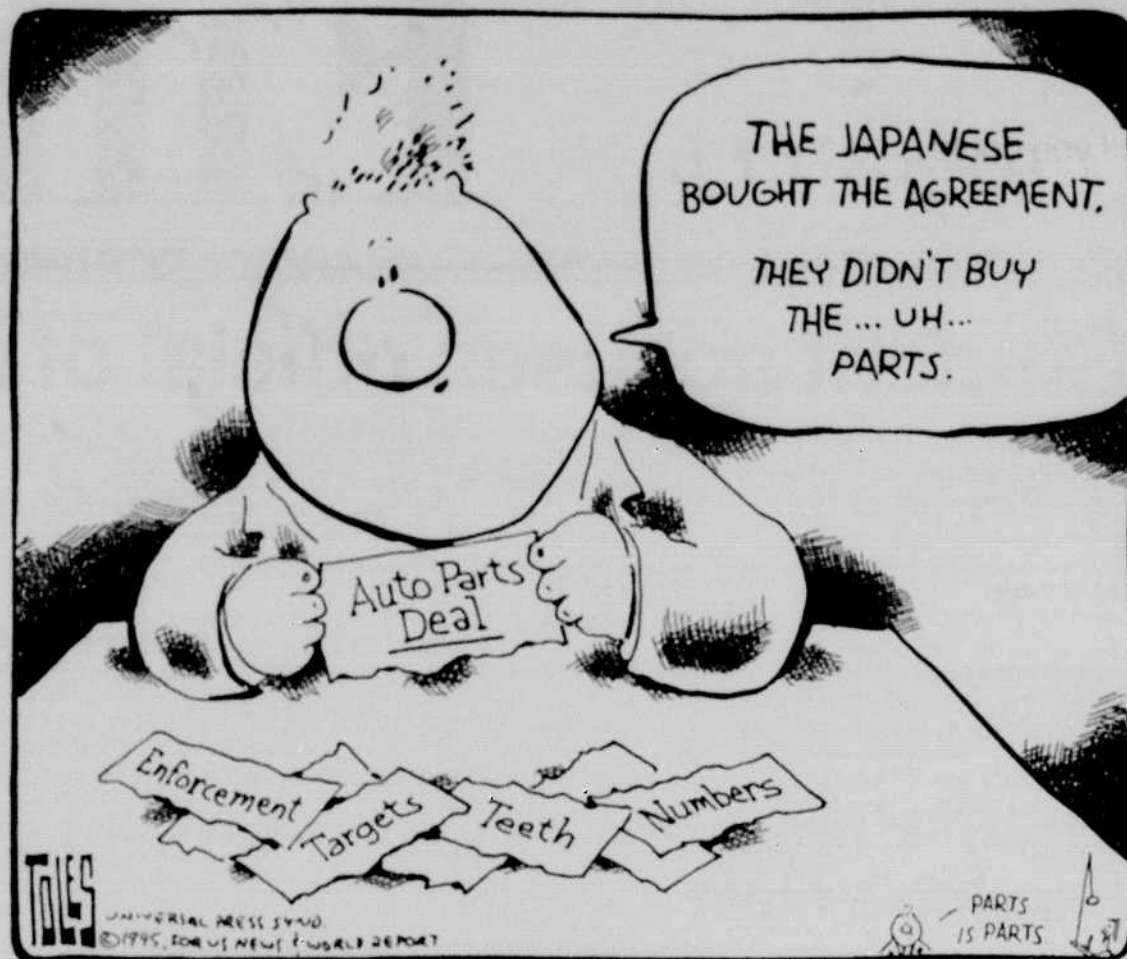
The debate doesn't end with cars. Other American manufacturers have their own complaints about Japanese trade practices.

Compromise might be the only path to cooperation for these two economic superpowers. America needs to continue to improve its products — be it head gaskets or picnic baskets — if Japan or any other country will be willing to be partners in trade.

The good news is that Clinton didn't throw up on any Japanese dignitaries, and he averted an automotive trade war.

Only time will tell which was most important.

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LETTERS

Americans lose

The U.S. Senate failed to invoke cloture last week on the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster Jr. for surgeon general. Even though the majority of Americans believe Foster deserved a vote on the Senate floor, political pandering to the extreme right stopped that from happening. Fairness did not prevail in last week's vote and Americans lost access to common-sense health policy as well as Dr. Foster's leadership and experience to solve pressing social problems like teen pregnancy.

Dr. Foster's record of service is second-to-none, and the American public has lost the benefit of his medical expertise. American women lost the chance to have our first surgeon general who specializes in women's health, and our young people lost a doctor who cares enough to give hundreds of poor kids a meaningful shot at a future.

Those in the Senate who opposed Dr. Foster hid behind a technicality to prevent a straight up-or-down vote. In the long run, this is a victory for no one.

Anna Leef
Director of Marketing Communications
Planned Parenthood of the Columbia/Willamette

Misquoted

It is difficult to write this letter regarding *Flux* magazine, the School of Journalism and Communications' annual publication. In the article "Between Two Worlds: Asian American Students Struggle to Define Themselves," I feel that the author, Putsata Reang, captured the stories of many students and their experiences at the University. My only concern focuses on the section in which I am quoted on page 37 as saying:

"If I come to school in a kimono, people will stare at me and make jokes. The bottom line for these students is that they have to get assimilated. They have to decide how much of

their cultures they will allow themselves, and how much rejection they can handle."

This is not my quote.

I would never advocate that students assimilate or face rejection. Instead I believe that I and others have devoted time and energy to work toward creating an environment where diversity is appreciated.

Let me say in closing that I hope my concerns regarding the misidentification of this quote do not detract from the importance of the article.

Lisa A. Suzuki, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Myths, lies

For more than 200 years, citizens of this country have been looking to their government to protect them from enemies, ensure social and economic justice, provide equal opportunity for all Americans, and protect their quality of life.

To fulfill this commitment, the government needs to set rules and regulations to monitor business activity that could potentially jeopardize public safety. Very often, the regulated community feels that the government is overly intrusive. However, the government has a responsibility to balance the public interest with the economic interests of the business community.

The difficulty in balancing these interests has led to a regulatory process and rules that are sometimes too inflexible or even irrational. We strongly support measured and reasonable regulatory reform. The government has a responsibility to protect the public, but regulations can be made more flexible and responsive.

Unfortunately, powerful corporate interests have seized on the need for regulatory reform as a means to eviscerate government's ability to safeguard the public. Dripping with vitriol, conservative legislators present horror stories about "outrageous" government regulation. Yet most of these stories are lit-

tle more than fiction.

Of course there are problems with the rule-making process, but promoting false stories of government excess does little to improve the process or create a framework for sensible legislative solutions.

Citizens for Sensible Safeguards, a coalition of more than 230 consumer, labor, environmental, religious and disability rights organizations, has compiled and debunked the most common horror stories exploited by powerful businesses and anti-regulatory leaders.

We've all heard heart-wrenching tales of children being denied a visit from the tooth fairy because of health regulations and of neighborhoods unable to protect themselves from raging fires in order to protect rats that may live in the area. Unfortunately, these examples are inaccurate, and in many cases, outright lies.

No regulation prohibits dentists from giving children back their baby teeth. The California fires of 1994, to which the rat protection anecdote refers, destroyed thousands of acres of property and many homes, but the damage was intensified by high winds, not the protection of endangered rodents.

It is bad enough that policy makers promote incomplete or even misinformation, but even worse is that they build momentum for legislation that will have a devastating impact on people — like the woman whose son dies of hamburger poisoning, or the worker who loses an arm in the workplace.

Americans want red tape and bureaucracy reduced, but they also want the environment protected, their workplaces safe, and the foods and medicines they purchase to be thoroughly tested. What they will get is a severe undermining of these safeguards as anti-regulatory zealots set out to frame a very complex issues into bite-size stories.

Gary D. Bass, Ph.D.
Chairman of Citizens for Sensible Safeguards

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