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What's More American Than an American Flag Made in China?

by Lois Kaneshiki

In case you haven't heard, many states are passing laws that make it illegal to sell American flags that were not made in the United States. I can hear the sound of labor unions cheering the deed as I write this. However, if America wishes to remain the great nation she is, she should celebrate American flags made in China and, for that matter, anything else foreigners make available to Americans at dirt-cheap prices.

I have a vivid memory of attending the local circus a few years ago with my kids. A vendor was selling small American flags for \$1. An older man yelled at the vendor, "Why aren't these flags made in *America*?!" Printed on the flags was the familiar, all-American phrase "Made in China."

While American companies are busy increasing the technological capacity of the world through computers, iPhones, communications systems, and robotics, the Chinese are making flags, cheap toys, and other inexpensive goods that Americans purchase. The savings Americans realize from these purchases, estimated at more than \$1,000 per year just from shopping at Wal-Mart, allow families to afford more luxuries than they otherwise could if every single product they bought had to be made in the United States.

According to Richard Florida of George Mason University, in the next decade 10 million hi-tech jobs will be created in America in what he calls the "creative economy," which includes the film industry. But Mr. "Made in America" wants his brethren stuck in factories making cheap American flags that will be sold at circuses.

There is no way you would be able to buy an American flag for \$1 if it were made in the United States. High worker wages, labor laws, unions, and burdensome regulations on business all add costs to doing business that are not a factor in Chinese-made products. So tell me, Mr. Made-in-America, do you want to pay \$5 for that American flag at the circus or \$1? Do you want to pay \$500 for that television made with Chinese parts or that was put together in China, or do you want to pay \$750 for the same one put together by American workers?

Do you want Americans making little flags to sell at circuses, or do you want them to be available to take higher-paying jobs that require more education? If you want to stick Americans in those unskilled jobs, I'll bet that there will be Chinese scientists and Indian engineers and Pakistani computer scientists who will be more than eager to take your "American" jobs.

Mr. Made-in-America, I don't care whether or not the man who built the car I drive every day was born in Pennsylvania, India, or Korea. I just want employers to be free to hire the most qualified person available for the job anywhere in the world at a mutually agreed-upon wage. Not only is that what economic freedom is all about, it also helps keep the cost of living down for all of us.

Practical arguments aside, why do we think we are celebrating our freedoms by passing more laws that restrict our freedoms? Why do I want the government telling me that I cannot purchase flags made from wherever I would like to buy them from at the lowest price possible? If we want to know the truth of why American flags are made in China and not the United States, let us educate ourselves about the benefits of free trade rather than pass more burdensome laws that hurt American consumers, no matter how patriotic they may seem on the surface.

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