

Leaders pass buck and blame in trade dilemma

A recent poll in *Time* magazine showed more than 75 percent of the 500 American adults asked believe that poor management by U.S. business leaders is the major reason for the trade imbalance with Japan. I agree with them.

I, like most Americans, own many Japanese products. I drive a Toyota Corolla. I asked for, and received, a Minolta Maxum camera for my 18th birthday. I have a Sanyo stereo (antiquated as it may be). Even the frames of my eyeglasses sport the infamous "Made in Japan" label. Am I the reason for the trade imbalance? Am I unamerican? I don't think so.

It wasn't a conscious decision to buy Japanese when I looked at these products. Buying Japanese or American products exclusively has never been an issue in my mind. I buy what gives the best performance, lasts the longest or is the easiest to work. Or maybe I just like the way it looks, sounds, or even feels.

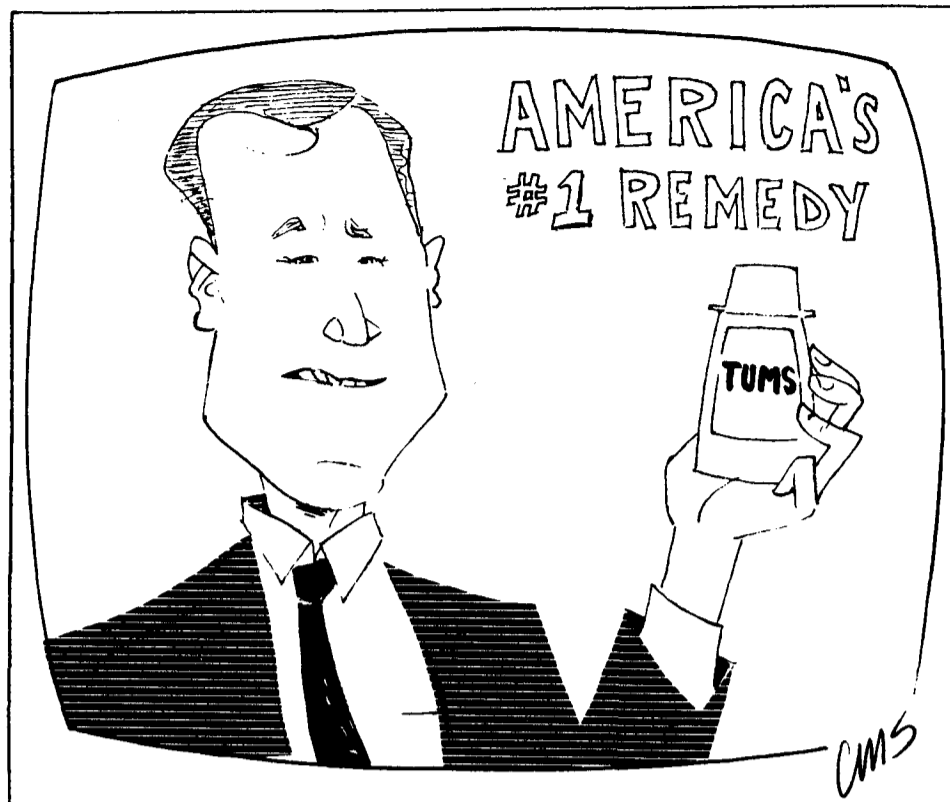
I do not condemn, belittle or in any way look down upon American-made products. I only know what I have bought in the past is what works for me. If it happens to be Japanese, then kudos to them for being one of the few companies capable of satisfying my demands. I'm not saying an American company could not do the same for me; they probably could if I gave them the chance. But I, like most Americans, am unwilling to change when I'm happy with what I have. It works for me.

I believe that the biggest factor in the trade imbalance is not the people buying the products, but the people who made them available in such abundance in the first place. People like myself have used Japanese products; we like them and we continue to use them despite the pain it causes the economy. We are creatures of habit, unwilling to change even in the face of the country's suffering economy.

This being the case, should we really point fingers at one another and pass judgement on those who "support the rape of American industry" and other dramatic expressions? Or should we learn from the mistakes of past U.S. business leaders who allowed, encouraged and even profited from the influx of Japanese products into the market?

Bush's trip was a dying knight's last valiant effort to save the kingdom from thieving bandits. Bandits, to whom castle guards opened the gate, with smiling faces and open, waiting hands. Apparently Bush is one of the few Americans to not realize the kingdom's been overrun; the castle mortgaged and his people sold on the lowest bidder.

To most Americans the highlight of Bush's trip was his



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"hurling" on the trousers of Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa. Outside of that unsettling spectacle, the general public had little or no interest in the outcome of Bush's trip. The most known fact about the trip was not Bush's attempts to secure "jobs, jobs, jobs;" but that the bill he and his entourage racked up on the 12-day journey was nearly as costly as the entire Gulf War.

Needless to say, Bush's popularity is no longer slowly slipping, but deflating as rapidly as helium from a party balloon. The end of November may find Bush doing spots for Tums unless he's able to turn the recession and spirits of Americans around. Until then we wait and watch...on our big screen Sony televisions.

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Capital Times

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