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Ohio Farmers to Grow Jobs

February begins with hopeful celebrations of light in many traditions. In the English Church, the Roman Church, and Orthodox Churches, Candle Mass on February 2, forty days after Christmas, blesses candles to commemorate the presentation of the Infant Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem, when Simeon the Righteous proclaimed Jesus the Light of the World. The Roman Church also recognizes the Feast of St. Blaise on February 3, of particular interest to Old Country Lawyers, when candles are used to bless the throats of the faithful to prevent disease. The Lunar New Year is celebrated in many Asian communities about this time with fireworks. The pre-Christian Gaelic celebration of Imbolc recognized the first stirrings of hibernating animals to seek the Sun in Britain, acknowledged in commercial America as Groundhog Day.

This writer prognosticates an end in sight to the Winter of Lost Jobs in America. The end of that Winter will be speeded by Ohio farmers. Three years ago, the February, 2008, Old Country Lawyer described how manufacturing jobs would come back to America when the wages paid to workers in Asia increased and the value of the dollar decreased in relation to the currencies in low-wage countries, so that the cost of production in Asia plus the cost of transporting goods to American Walmarts would not be less than the cost of paying a living wage to American workers. It appears this may be coming to pass.

Of the one billion, four hundred million Chinese citizens, it seems perhaps three hundred million who are industrial workers, are raising their standard of living from one meal a day to two meals a day. This doubles the demand for food for a group the size of the entire population of the United States. China cannot increase its domestic food production enough to meet that increase. China must import food, and the United States produces a surplus of wheat, corn, and rice more efficiently than any other country.

The government of China has kept its workers from what most Americans would consider "consumer goods". The government of China has also kept its currency exchange rate with the dollar artificially low so that Chinese products cost less in the United States and American products cost more in China. The reason for, and so far, the result of, these policies, is that goods produced in China are exported to the United States so as to undercut and ultimately destroy American manufacturing. These policies will now come to an end.

The government of China will likely NOT be able to keep its workers from increasing consumption of food. China will import food from the United States. China may keep its currency exchange rate artificially low, in which case the food imported from the United States will be more expensive and the Chinese workers will have to be paid more, in Chinese currency, to purchase the imported food. If Chinese workers are paid more, Chinese goods exported to the United States will cost more, and goods produced in America will not be undercut so badly and patriotic Americans may choose to spend a little more to buy American-made goods even though they did not choose to spend a LOT more to buy American-made goods. Or China may let its currency exchange rate rise to a market level with the dollar, in which case the food imported from the United States will not be more expensive to Chinese workers, but Chinese goods exported to the United States will cost more, and goods produced in America will not be undercut so badly and patriotic Americans may choose to spend a little more to buy American-made goods even though they did not choose to spend a LOT more to buy

American-made goods. In either case, American products will be competitively priced and American manufacturing jobs may come back.

How may we speed this recovery along?

First, protect American food production. Protect the land and water with which our food is grown. Do not let the land and water be poisoned for short-term gain. Eliminate government programs which discourage production, or subsidize non-production.

Second, prevent diversion of food products to non-food uses. Eliminate government subsidies for ethanol made from human-edible corn or grain, restrict the subsidy to cellulosic ethanol made from the silage.

Pure and simple demand for American farm products to feed working people in other parts of the world will support prices to earn farmers a fair return without government interference. If the silage can be converted to fuel, so much the better. This February, light a candle or a firecracker or a bonfire as your tradition provides, that the light of fair trade and living wages will bring a season of growth to America.

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