



Expert talks international trade at university event

By Matt Wrye, Staff Writer

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You've heard about U.S. foreign trade policies displacing American companies and workers.

But what do consumers lose out on because of free trade?

Absolutely nothing, Daniel Griswold argues - in fact, they stand to gain everything, and so does the U.S. economy.

The director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at Cato Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit public policy research organization, told local business professionals at Cal State San Bernardino's Business Stimulus Series this week that the benefits of free trade between the United States and foreign countries vastly outweigh the disadvantages, including the displacement American manufacturing workers.

He has some advice for President Barack Obama.

"(The administration) needs to avoid raising trade barriers," Griswold said during an interview after his speech. "They've already raised tariffs on tires and refused to press Congress to bring trade agreements to a vote. Congress's priority should be to bring down trade barriers that hurt

low-income and middle-income Americans."

Trade policies with China may have eroded American manufacturing jobs, but politicians who pander to labor unions are ignoring consumers, Griswold said.

He says the argument that free trade undermines our middle-class work force "is one of the biggest lies in the trade debate."

America's economic success over the last century has hinged on its ability to trade with other free-trade countries because consumers are wealthier when they save money, Griswold said.

And for every American standing in the unemployment line because they were displaced by free trade, there are 30 others standing in front of them for other reasons.

Instead of worrying about factories that shut down and move to Asia, "Americans need to think more every day about exporting, especially to emerging markets, because that's where the growth is," Griswold said.

That might not be feasible for some companies, according to Bud Weisbart, vice president of a Fontana-based material manufacturer for the aerospace and trucking industries, A & R Tarpaulins Inc.

"It's hard to say," Weisbart said. "The degree to whether there's a market overseas (for your product) is certainly questionable. But if the

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opportunity exists, yes, try it and see."

Weisbart is making a trip to Japan soon to establish key relationships.

"Your industry opens the door to relationships, and in Japan, those relationships are friendship based," he said. "Those friendships are the basis for possibly doing business down the road."

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