

## International Competition

*By Hap Hansen*

Loss of jobs in America is a serious and growing problem. It is a problem that cuts the breadth and width of this country and it may very well be the most critical in small businesses, which in many cases, are struggling for their very survival. Competition. Most of us want to do the right thing and buy American products to help our workers keep their existing jobs. We also want to expand the job market so young Americans just entering the work force will be able to earn a decent living. Therein lies the problem. Competition. Just what is an American product anyway?

Take automobiles as an example. Let's say you have a choice between buying a Chevy, Dodge, Nissan or Toyota. Pretty obvious choice, isn't it? Or is it? Foreign or American? Let's see now. Some Chevy's are assembled in Canada from American components. Some Dodges are built in Japan and imported to the United States. Many Nissans and Toyotas are built right here in America by American workers, usually using Japanese parts. National and International competition. So, how in the world can we tell which cars are American made and which are foreign made? The answer is, we can't! What a puzzling predicament! Here we are, wanting to do the right thing and buy American, but we don't know how and probably can't find out. Even though some automobile companies are advertising the percentage of American-made products in cars, it still doesn't give us the complete answer. Why? Competition.

Because ownership of the manufacturer could be American, foreign, or multi-national. Assembly could be in any one of several foreign countries. Components most likely are manufactured in a variety of foreign countries from Taiwan to Germany and from Canada to Argentina. The fact is, it is nearly impossible to buy American 100 percent of the time. We are rapidly becoming an international community where brand loyalty means little, quality sometimes means less, competition means potential layoffs, and profitability means everything. Can our brothers and sisters and sons and daughters compete in this international environment? Absolutely! But we must concentrate on quality and efficiency. To use an old cliché, American workers can and will build a better mousetrap. And when they do, American and foreign consumers will beat a path to their door. Competition.