

Organizing to Promote Exports

By ROBERT DOLE

Too much of the debate in this country over trade issues consists of finger-pointing.

Not without reason, we all start by blaming the Japanese. But, faced with facts showing that not all of the problems are made in Japan, we turn quickly to blaming each other.

Business lays the blame at labor's doorstep, and vice versa. Democrats say it is all the fault of George Bush, and Republicans respond by lambasting the Democratically controlled Congress.

Who, in fact, is to blame? The answer is "all of the above." Japan and other trading partners are clinging stubbornly to unfair trading practices. Both business and labor, at times, have been too greedy and too short-sighted. The president hasn't always done the right thing, or done it aggressively enough. And Congress — on this issue, as well as others — sometimes does too much, and does it wrong.

Having acknowledged all of that, though, isn't it about time we put aside all the ally-bashing, finger-pointing and bad-mouthing, and get down to the serious business of righting our trade imbalance?

With tenacity, adequate resources and a coherent strategy, we won the Cold War. It's about time we got ourselves organized with similar determination to win the "hot war" of international trade.

Trade should be at the very top of the organizational structure of our government. We have been debating trade reorganization for years. Let's stop debating and start reorganizing in a way that will give us a lean, mean governmental structure to attack our trade problems.

I would suggest three things we should do to get started.

First, trade should be at the very top of the organizational structure of our government. We've been debating trade reorganization for years. Let's stop debating, and start reorganizing in a way that will give us a lean, mean governmental structure to attack our trade problems.

At a minimum, we should upgrade the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) — renaming it the Department of International Trade, and bringing under its control some of the foreign trade elements now in the Commerce Department.

Our Trade Representative already participates in Cabinet meetings, but a Secretary of International Trade would project an even bigger and more influential voice. In addition, acknowledging that trade is central to our national security, we should make the Secretary of International Trade a member of the National Security Council.

Second, we should dramatically beef up our intelligence and information-gathering capabilities on trade issues.

The end of the Cold War and the coming of a "New World Order" have led to a number of suggestions for changes in the structure of our intelligence community, but none is more urgently needed than giving a higher priority to collection and analysis of intelligence on trade issues.

Specifically, within the CIA, we should create a new directorate of economic and trade intelligence, headed by a second deputy director of Central Intelligence. The new directorate should be formed partly by consolidating economic- and trade-related analysts from elsewhere in the intelligence community, and partly by increasing hiring of such specialists.

The new deputy director would supplement the one deputy we now

have — who, by tradition and training, focuses on political and administrative tasks. The second deputy, while heading the analytic directorate, should have the authority to tap our worldwide intelligence-collection apparatus for trade-related information.

Third, we should make a parallel organizational change at the National Security Council. The NSC has the critical task of deciding when and how to put national security-related decisions on the president's desk — a "door-keeping" function whose importance is recognized by every busy executive.

We need a second deputy national security adviser, to give economic and trade issues the advocate they deserve in our national security considerations. That official must be staffed by top-flight economic and trade specialists who — like their political counterparts in the existing National Security Council structure — can tap all relevant departments and agencies of the executive branch.

These changes are certainly no panacea for our trade problems. But they are a start — a way to get ourselves organized to have a fighting chance to win the "hot war" of trade.

Sen. Dole is Republican leader of the U.S. Senate.