

Japanese Influence

All of which brings Kotkin and Grabowicz to the Japanese, who are so good at taking over American innovations and improving on them. California does not see the Japanese as any great menace. As the ultimate assembly point for imports from Asia, California's location on the "Pacific rim" has helped produce more than a million jobs. California looks forward to becoming the financial center of "the Asian community." California agribusinessmen have built fortunes through serving as Japan's leading supplier of fruits and its second-largest source of cotton.

Governor Jerry Brown's advisers have counseled him to take the lead in making California a "Pacific rim" power, quite as if the state were a nation all by itself. Andy Safir, the director of the California Office of Economic Policy, puts the Brown Administration view in perspective. "There is a tendency," he says, "to look to imports for our industrial goods that used to come from the East Coast . . . now we look to Japan . . . for us the Japanese are a close market . . . you have in Japan an economy that can respond to specialized demands of a place like California while you have no such ability in the East."

The admiration for Japan has led

to the adoption of Japanese-style management techniques by large numbers of California corporations. In the high-tech firms of Silicon Valley, tennis courts, swimming pools and running paths are supplied to employees, quite in the Japanese style. At the new San Francisco high-rise headquarters of the Shaklee Corporation one whole floor has been reserved as a sports and recreation center, all encircled by an indoor jogging path. "The purpose of the future revolution in the West," says Action Instrument's founder Jim Pinto, "is to eliminate the difference between workers, managers, and the owners by making all the same. If you are part of the place, you can do everything you can to increase efficiency and productivity. In many ways Action Instruments is very Japanese."

Despite their personal antipathy to Ronald Reagan and their partiality to Jerry Brown, Kotkin and Grabowicz see "Reaganism" as a continuing wave of the future. The California style, they say, is taking over the whole United States. High-tech enterprise will continue to keep the California spirit of entrepreneurship going strong. The odd thing is that Kotkin was born in West Germany and Grabowicz in Springfield, Massachusetts. But they are Californians now. ☉



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