

I would like to use this week's column to report to you on the International Economics Conference sponsored (and paid for) by the American Council on Germany and its German counterpart, Die Atlantik Brucke.

The three-day seminar focused in on international banking, and my participation involved being the American speaker on the third day and discussing the "Politics of Economics".

The conference left me with several thoughts, but three are worth noting especially. First, Europeans are increasingly looking to the United States as a sound investment. The historic trend of United States private capital being invested in Europe has crested, and the reverse is beginning to happen.

This is a very favorable trend since the "capital shortage" issue will be one facing all industrial countries in the next decade.

Why the United States? Several reasons. The devaluation of the dollar in 1973 after years of being artificially maintained (as well as the current policy of international floating exchange rates) has made our currency competitive. The enormous dollars flow to Europe since World War II are now less attractive an investment to U.S. citizens and corporations. The energy crisis has hurt Europe (without its own resources) more than the United States. Finally, our labor force, although higher paid, is more productive resulting in a labor per unit cost lower than our European counterparts. What does this all mean? I believe it means jobs and capital in flow unlike anything that we've experienced before.

The decision by Volkswagen to locate in the United States is only the beginning.

Second, I was convinced at the Conference to seriously focus in on the issue of international economics. There are a few members of

Congress who are knowledgeable and concerned about this increasingly critical issue -- and Rep. Tom Rees of California, the most experienced, is retiring at the end of this year. There is a definite vacuum , and I hope to fill the gap in committee work on the Banking & Currency Committee.

Thirdly, seeing the "Wall" between East and West Berlin was staggering. The sharp contrast between the two parts of this divided city was manifest not only in terms of economic prosperity but also in terms of spirit. The lack of casualness, of spontaneity in East Berlin was surprising in its obviousness. The struggle of the two ideological monoliths has that city and that wall as its cutting edge. Freedom is an oft-used word; and like many overly indulged expressions, loses some of its language clout. Not in West Berlin, nor in the mind of anyone who has seen the Wall.

The conference was very worthwhile for me, and I hope I represented the Congress well. I hope to be able to discuss it with you in detail at future town meetings.