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SAUDI WAY

Channel 6 KOIN-TV 3/19/84 5:40

Judy Rooks

In Saudi Arabia, the oil boom days are over. U.S. exports to that country will be lower for a second straight year.

And in Riyadh this week, Oregonians are learning the Saudi way is the only way to do business there.

Mike Donahue and photographer Dale Burkholtz are with the Oregon trade mission and reports that locals do enjoy some advantages.

Mike Donahue

It is not unusual to wait weeks to get an appointment with the Saudi Cabinet Minister. But with Governor Atiyeh leading the way, Oregon's trade delegation got in to see three ministers the first day.

That is like seeing three U.S. Cabinet secretaries in one day.

Arriving for his first call at the Ministry of Commerce, Governor Atiyeh however was sober about the prospects.

Earlier at a breakfast briefing, Atiyeh had been told that the Saudi economy is in a mild recession and that the days of unrestricted buying are over.

That because of the oil glut, the Saudi's are reducing their imports of U.S. goods.

Adopting a buy Saudi campaign, the government is increasing exports of its non-oil products. It is striving to become self-sufficient in agricultural as Oregon's wheat grower Bob Buchanan was soon to discover.

Bob Buchanan

Our point of view is that our prices are very cheap these days and we have an abundant supply so we are in a very good position to (mumble).

(more)

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Mike Donahue

Buchanan's enthusiasm though was quickly capped by the Minister of Commerce, Dr. Sulamin Al Sulain who said that this country right now has little demand for Oregon soft-white wheat.

And instead, is growing its own hard red variety. He advised Buchanan though don't abandon the Saudi market.

Bob Buchanan

They eventually are going to get their reserves built up and need to be diverting those resources into other more productive resources and I think that they will be back into buying wheat at that point.

Mike Donahue

So it will be a few years?

Bob Buchanan

I think so.

Mike Donahue

On to the Ministry of Industry and Electricity. Were along with the message of self-sufficiency, the businessmen where given a list of needs and advised to meet them by forming joint ventures with Saudi merchants.

Rather than trying to ship finished Oregon products direct.

Western power products of Hood River already have had to give in to Saudi demands that its factory make the name plates on the Oregon made electrical boxes.

Western's President, Bill Bright admits that joint venturism was enevitable, but he is not discouraged.

Bill Bright

Well we will have to look at the possibility of joint ventures in my opinion to find the right kind of partners to allow the right kinds of projects that might benefit both Oregon businessmen and the Saudi requirement.

Mike Donahue

Last but probably most enfluential of the three ministers visited this morning was Hishan Nazer who is responsible for the country's five year plan.

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Mike Donahue
(cont.)

He lead the Oregonians to believe that they have an advantage. Since to the Saudi's cultural exchanges comes first.

And business relations flow from there.

Oregon's higher education of so many Saudi's therefore as his excellency put it, a definite leg up.

As the day is ending, the business dealing is only beginning. Here at the exclusive Equestrian Club, the travel-weary Oregonians are hosted by their Saudi counterparts.

For what the golf course is to the American businessman, the dinner party is to the Saudi merchants.

Bowing to the Saudi customer of brevity, the Governor's speech to the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce lasted less than five minutes. As usualy, he poked fun at Californians.

And he joined those commenting on the large number of Oregon-educated Saudi's even in this room.

Declaring in his state, people come first, the Governor appeared to both Islamic law and Bedoin tradition in promoting the Oregon connection.

In Riyadh Saudi Arabia, this is Mike Donahue reporting for Newsroom 6.

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