

Express News Article
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One of the rarest things on earth is for politics and economics to come together in a way that is truly beneficial for a country and its people. I just stumbled across such an event last week when my wife and I visited her daughter, Anke, who lives and works in San Miguel de Allende in México.

México is facing one of the same challenges the U.S. faces. That is the movement of manufacturing jobs to China. Over a decade ago Anke started a business in San Miguel called Celito Lindo Estudio. She began the business making nichos; shadow boxes which are traditional Mexican religious icons. They typically consisted of a metal box in the shape of a cross with a picture of a saint inside. The business got off to a good start and then Anke's creativity kicked in.

She began to let her imagination run. She varied the shape and theme of her nichos. She injected humor, pop culture and a bit of raciness into her products and she started participating in major gift shows in Los Angeles and New York. The effect of this effort has been stunning. A couple of weeks ago a new friend from Dallas whom we met last spring told me that he and his wife had visited a gift shop in Ann Arbor, Michigan in September. My wife had told them about Anke's nichos, and when they saw something similar at the shop in Ann Arbor, he said to his wife, "This looks like Anke's work." The proprietor's face lit up and he asked, "Do you know Anke?"

The success of Cielito Lindo Estudio has had many effects. Anke has hired about a dozen young women from the state of Guanajuato, where San Miguel is located, to produce her nichos. Guanajuato happens to be the Mexican state from which most of the Mexicans fleeing to the United States come. Many of the young women who work at Cielito Lindo are single mothers. This job has given them hope. That stems from the fact that Anke's clientele stretches from Asia, across the U.S. and on to Europe, and her business is highly profitable. She diligently pays income taxes to Mexico every year. And there is no way these jobs will ever move to China.

A few weeks ago I visited my daughter, Marmie, who lives in Albuquerque, N.M. She told me about recently buying a piñata for her son's birthday that was sealed and completely filled with newspaper. It was obviously made in a place, probably China, where the workers had no idea what a piñata is. Anke cannot afford such a thing which is why these jobs will remain in Mexico.

Last week Anke told us of the very rare example of effective government economics. To her surprise, the Government of Guanajuato and the City of San Miguel informed her that she will henceforth receive a stipend to offset a part of her participation in those gift shows in Los Angeles, and New York. I do not know the details, but I immediately was impressed. This is not welfare and it is not a handout. It strikes me as a good investment. It is a wise assist to a successful business. It will increase Anke's margin in an enterprise that has a proven record of successful competition, creation of good jobs for good people in México and will probably be paid for with increased tax revenue.

Sometimes governments can pursue sensible economic policies.