I would point out to members of the committee that the statement of the Textile Manufacturers Institute this morning also emphasized their support for the inclusion of cordage and cordage products within the basic legislation, and therefore I take it that they would support the substance of my own bill, H.R. 13755.

Briefly, Mr. Chairman, with regard to cordage it should be borne in mind that the problems which have affected our domestic textile industry generally, and which have already been brought to your attention, as a result of the rapidly increasing imports of foreign textiles, apply even more fully and to a more critical degree to the domestic cordage industry.

During World War II, for example, the U.S. cordage industry was forced to expand to meet our wartime efforts. With 22 members of the industry running 23 mills at full capacity, they were able to meet these needs. That was in 1945. Today there are only 10 members of the cordage industry left in the United States operating 14 mills.

The capacity of American producers to make rope is virtually half today what its capacity was back in 1945. The commercial market for hard fiber rope in the United States has declined over 53 percent since 1955 while the quantity of hard fiber rope imports has tripled. U.S. manufacturers are selling about 55 percent of what they were in 1955 and the whole industry is experiencing a definite downward trend.

I say this with some personal knowledge of the situation since one of the leading American cordage manufacturers is located in my own district, the Columbian Rope Co. of Auburn, N.Y. They have been faced with a heavy loss in sales and consequently an attrition in employment, which has been felt throughout the whole area.

In the area of synthetic rope, which was pioneered in American markets, the Kennedy tariff round has reduced the duty on this produce by 50 percent, a development which could well bring about the same situation for synthetic rope that already exist for natural fibers, unless the remedial action proposed in my legislation is taken.

The cordage industry has already stated that if another situation should develop as it did in World War II, the industry as a whole would simply not be able to respond to our increased needs because of the drastic decline in the industry since that time.

Therefore, for our own defense purposes, we cannot afford to depend on foreign capacities. The domestic cordage industry simply must be kept viable, and it obviously cannot meet the competition of foreign markets with their lower selling price, their cost of materials, and their lower labor cost under present tariff conditions as far as natural fiber is concerned; and they certainly couldn't meet the situation with regard to synthetic fibers if the tariff conditions proposed under the Kennedy Round are carried out.

I just don't think that this country would want our merchant marine, our Navy, our Marine Corps, our Army, our Coast Guard, and our Air Force, to have to depend solely on foreign sources.

So, Mr. Chairman, I hope that in these remarks I have been able to show the vast importance of the domestic cordage industry to America's defense and by implication to the American economy generally.