

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

Indicative of a possible new trend in the textile industry is Burlington's entry in 1966 into the manufacture of furniture through the acquisition of Globe Furniture Co.

Industrial Fabrics.—Accounting for about 17% of fabric consumption, industrial textiles are engineered and produced for a wide variety of applications. Substrates (base fibers) for vinyl coatings, which are used as backings in apparel and automobile upholstery fabrics, appear to be one of the faster growing lines. Other important products include sewing thread, tire cord, transportation upholstery, glass fibers, belting, hoses, filters, and twine.

Reflecting the economic slowdown and the automotive strikes, sales of industrial textiles declined last year. Prospects for these lines now appear a little more promising; supplies of most industrial cloths are in good balance with demand, and there has been some firming of prices. Leading producers of industrial textiles include Stevens, Burlington, West Point-Pepperell, and Collins & Aikman.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Durable Press and Soil Release.—A process involving the application of heat and chemicals, durable press imparts shape-retaining and wrinkle-resistant properties to fabrics and garments. Because of the tendencies toward discoloration and abrasion when used on all-cotton fabrics, durable press is growing rapidly in polyester-cotton blended fabrics for use in slacks, shirts, rainwear, work clothes, sportswear, sheets, and tablecloths. Among textiles companies with their own durable press processes are Cone Mills (Cone Press), Lowenstein (Never Press) and Burlington (Never, Never Iron). Adding considerable potential to the durable press field is soil release, a finish which reduces the soiling problem associated with polyester; among the participants in this field are Burlington (Come Clean), Graniteville (X-It), and Springs (Springs Clean).

Bonding.—Consisting of two fabrics joined by fusion or adhesion, bonded fabrics lend themselves to rapid machine production, eliminate the need for a separate lining, and add stability and strength to delicate fabrics. Bonded fabrics give improved wearability and wrinkle-resistant and shape-retention properties to garments. Acetate tricot, widely used as a bonding material in apparel, is produced by such companies as Collins & Aikman and Stevens. Reeves Brothers' Curon process, which uses a multicellular polyurethane foam, is widely applied in foam bonding.

Knits.—The knitted fabrics industry should grow at a 10% to 15% rate annually for the next several years with the development of new stitch formations and a wider range of textile yarns. Estimates by DuPont indicate that by the early 1970's, half of all yardage used by the textile and apparel industries will be knitted, up from a present ratio of about one-third knit and two-thirds woven. Many of the major textile companies have knit operations.

Nonwovens.—A material made by interlocking fibers with a bonding agent, nonwovens possess the advantages of high porosity and bulk, good shape retention and nonravelling edges. This material, still a minor percentage of textile fabrics, is being used in the manufacture of wearing apparel and particularly for hospital-medical applications. Stevens, through its joint venture with Kimberly-Clark produces Kaycel, a nonwoven material. Riegel Textile is using a nonwoven rayon fabric in a flushable sanitary napkin which will soon be test marketed on a regional basis by American Home Products; eventually, flushable diapers may be put into test market. West Point-Pepperell is supplying a nonwoven fabric as a raw material for B. F. Goodrich's synthetic leather, Aztran.

Stretch Fabrics.—Because they offer comfort, fit, and good drape qualities, stretch fabrics, with yield and return properties built in, are a growing segment of the textile industry. Specialists in this field include United Elastic, International Stretch Products, and Wyomissing.

Malt Process.—Another new fabric-forming method is "stitch-through" technology, especially using the Malt process. The Malimo machines, which were developed in East Germany, produce fabrics at speeds at least 10 times greater than the fastest loom or knitting machines. The new Malt fabrics have greater bursting and tear strength than conventional goods and are likely to be increasingly used in the manufacture of products now made of other fabrics. Burlington and Indian Head are active in the development of this new process.

LABOR

The move of many textile companies to the South over the years has lost much of its cost-saving advantages because of narrowing wage differentials. In September, 1967, the textile industry granted wage increases of 6%-6½%, the fifth increase since 1963. Although another wage boost is possible later

this year, it would probably be offset at least in part by higher selling prices.

Approximately 20% of the 952,000 mill workers are members of the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA). This Spring the TWUA will seek wage increases, as contracts reopen or terminate, at 50 woolen and worsted mills in the New England area. Since the union movement is weakest in the South, the TWUA has selected Stevens (whose operations are located principally in this area) as the target for organizing efforts. Since 1963, the union has spent about \$2 million on membership drives that have proven unsuccessful. Full-scale unionization of the industry is not expected in the near future.

IMPORTS

More than 10% of all textile yardage consumed in this country is imported. In recent years, the surge of foreign goods from low-wage countries has intensified, with imports of textile and apparel products (converted to equivalent square yards) reaching a peak 2,796 million square yards in 1966. A portion of the increase in 1965-66 stemmed from the temporary inability of the domestic industry to fill large military orders at a time of strong civilian demand. Reflecting softness in the U.S. textile market and lower prices for polyester, total imports declined about 8% last year. Cotton and wool imports in 1967 were down 19% and 14%, respectively, but imports of man-made fiber textiles rose 17%.

In an attempt to stem the rise in cotton textile imports from low wage nations, the Long-Term Agreement (LTA) was instituted among 19 nations in October, 1962, for a period of five years. The LTA permits the signatories unilaterally to control imports of cotton textiles without compensating the nations that could demonstrate that their exports growth would be curtailed by the action. Therefore, under certain conditions, the agreement permits the U.S. to limit imports of cotton textiles. The LTA contemplated a growth rate in imports of approximately 5% annually, but it has not been wholly effective in keeping imports down to that level. However, similar agreements do not exist for woolen and synthetic textiles. Although the LTA was extended in 1967 for an additional three years, the Kennedy Round of trade negotiations last summer provided average tariff reductions of 21% on cotton textiles, 15% on man-made fiber products, and 2% on woolen textiles.