

Import data shows that imports of wool fabric have been declining over the last several years. Total imports dropped from 84.9 million square yards in 1965 to 67.1 million square yards in 1966, and 60.6 million square yards in 1967. For the same years, imports from Japan, the major supplier, dropped from 40.4 million square yards in 1965 to 37.7 million square yards in 1966, with a slight increase to 38.7 million square yards in 1967.

Certainly this shows a declining pattern of imports, not the rapidly increasing imports which the domestic industry would have you believe. Imports for 1968 so far are higher than 1967, but are at about the same level as 1966.

I am in the market every day, and there is more than ample evidence that domestic mills are solidly booked ahead, and in many cases are not able to meet their customers' demands.

I participated in the Tariff Commission proceedings on textiles and apparel. I believe that this report has put the entire matter in perspective. The Commission found declining U.S. production of chiefly wool fabrics. However, it remarked:

For the most part, the failure of output for such products to expand appears attributable chiefly to changes either in fashion or style, to technology, or both. In relatively few instances do imports appear to have been a major factor.

The Commission continued:

The domestic output of woven wool fabrics has, however, also been materially affected by the significantly greater popularity of blended woven fabrics, made in the same plants as all-wool fabrics, particularly for use in lightweight summer suiting and slacks.

Quite clearly, as the Commission found, this is an all-fiber industry. If the U.S. production of chiefly wool fabrics is decreasing, but production of chiefly manmade fiber fabrics blended with wool is increasing, and all together there has been an overall increase in production in the same mills, this is certainly no cause for cries of injury or the imposition of quotas.

I would like to state that the essence of this business is style and quality. Imports enjoy a favorable market for their high quality, high priced fabrics, to the benefit of clothing manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. The American industry is doing beautifully in its much broader market of lower-priced, mass-produced fabric. I believe that the domestic industry cannot only live with imports, but can, as it has shown, prosper.

In conclusion, please note our case in point is briefly that we are providing the basic materials necessary to provide the affluent American men with selective quality, American-made clothing, and in so doing, we are also providing employment for American men and women who make and sell these finished garments.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for giving our small organization this opportunity to appear before you.

I sincerely trust my brief remarks have been informative.

(Mr. Bissinger's prepared statement follows:)

STATEMENT OF FRED BISSINGER, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOOLEN IMPORTERS, INC.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Fred Bissinger. I appear today before the Committee on behalf of the American Association of Woolen