

We are the largest manufacturers of umbrellas in the United States. At one time we employed in excess of 400 persons. In recent years our employment level has dropped gradually to 200 persons. We have our main plant in Baltimore, Maryland and a branch plant in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. We have been in business since 1906.

We have been putting our voice into complaints about competition of imports since the early Committee on Reciprocity hearings in 1954. The writer has gone on record at the United States Tariff Commission hearings on various occasions. It is unfortunate that the executive branch of the government did not afford any positive relief when the Tariff Commission had recommended such action.

The umbrella industry was declared essential for the health and welfare of the American people during World War II and specific allocations of steel and materials necessary were made for the purpose of affording the product to the American public during such a national emergency. It now appears that our industry has been thrown to the wolves, so to speak, and our appeals over the years have fallen on deaf ears.

In 1967, it is my understanding that close to eight (8) out of every ten (10) umbrellas sold in this country were not made here. If this were true of a variety of other industries that were considered "more important" more attention may possibly have been paid to the situation. I read just recently that the ladies' footwear industry is tremendously alarmed because approximately 30% of shoes sold in 1967 were of foreign make. This received much notoriety in the press but the plight of almost 80% of the umbrella industry having been taken away by foreign-made merchandise seems to have gained no prominence whatsoever.

The American consumer needs umbrellas. The American umbrella manufacturer is destined to be put out of business because we are fearful that we will not even have suppliers available. The frame manufacturers, the textile suppliers and even the handle-makers are disappearing. We cannot possibly make umbrellas in this country without American-made frames if we were in a state of national emergency. The American public cannot have available umbrellas for protection if there are no longer any makers of the product left in existence.

Many of our competitors have turned to becoming importers of umbrella bases (an umbrella without a handle) and they are merely sitting and gluing a variety of handles on them. Ironically, those that are trafficking in such a product are making probably better profits than if they were making the product themselves. They are importing Italian florentine handles, for example, and are gluing them to a Japanese-made nylon "base" and the American retailer is making at least 100% profit on the cost price in gross profit. The American consumer is not getting the outstanding value that many are led to believe is in existence due to these low priced imports. It is my opinion that the consumer is paying a price which actually is giving in many cases a greater percentage of profit to both the importer and the retailer.

For the first time, this year of 1968 has caused us to break down our resistance and to import more Asiatic-made umbrellas than ever in our history. We are doing this with great reluctance as it has been our policy to make and sell essentially an American-made product even though it may possibly have one or two foreign-made components, such as the handle or a fabric. The more we delve into this foreign type product ourselves, the smaller number of people we will be able to employ. We have already been cutting down hours and our employment level this years because of this.

We have been asked repeatedly by municipal and federal agencies to assist in the employment of individuals, to spend a much greater amount of time and effort and expense to train possible persons for whom it has been difficult to gain employment. With such a situation with which we are faced, as much as we should like to cooperate in such a program, we find the efforts and expense in this type of program too great. Ordinarily we would be among the first to cooperate as we are very mindful of the need for cooperation of business people to assist in this important matter.

We understand very well the sensitivity of relationships with other nations, the need for encouraging others to buy from us so that we have a good balance of trade, the need for dispelling the fear of other nations that we may hoist old fashioned protectionist tariffs, etc. However we cannot understand the attitude that has been prevailing of throwing American industries into almost complete annihilation. People who have been trained, investments that have been made in specialized machinery cannot be turned into other pursuits at the turn of a switch. Besides, we feel that we are entitled to some kind of