

STATEMENT OF HON. E. Y. BERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am here on behalf of the mink ranchers of South Dakota and the United States with a special plea that their problem be recognized by this committee and the Congress. The ranks of the domestic mink ranchers are being decimated by an avalanche of imported mink skins which come into this country duty free. The serious thing is that these imports are growing by leaps and bounds taking over the entire domestic industry and putting hundreds of domestic mink ranchers and farmers out of business.

It should be pointed out at the beginning that the mink market today in the United States is the result of an expensive campaign conducted by the domestic mink producers. According to the records, the domestic industry has spent over \$22 million in promoting mink as a fashion item. Silver fox and other skins which were the vogue in years gone by have taken a second or third place. Mink, as a result of this domestic fur farm advertising, has become the most popular fur for women. The sad thing is that foreign mink producers are contributing nothing toward the business of building up the American mink demand, but they are getting a free ride and reaping the benefit of the time and expense the domestic industry has put into building up a great market.

Another point that should be mentioned is the fact that after building up this fur industry and educating the American public on the value of good mink, cheap imports are tarnishing the image these domestic ranchers have worked so long to develop. The average value of the mink imported is \$12 to \$13 per pelt whereas the domestic pelts average from \$18 to \$20 and upward. It is obvious these cheaper pelts have an adverse effect on the mink image. Just as serious, however, is the fact that these cheap imported skins serve as a depressant to the entire mink pricing structure in this country.

Another thing that I believe the committee should take into consideration is the protection to the American consumer. The consumer is not getting any bargain by purchasing these cheaper imported pelts. True, the cheaper pelt is primarily used as garment trim, but the consumer would still be getting a better buy if they had a better quality pelt for trim. The consumer is paying more for the "image of mink" and getting less for his dollar. When a husband goes out to buy his wife a stole and later discovers to his sad disappointment that his stole is made from cheap imported mink, it is a scar that carries over even to the domestic production.

In addition to considering the fact that the market has been built by the domestic producer and is being taken over by the foreign producer and that the consumer is buying less than he expects when he buys these imported products, the question is what this expanded import industry is doing to the American economy as a whole.

There are approximately 4,500 mink ranchers in the United States with a capital investment of approximately \$171 million. Domestic pelt consumption in 1966 was 13,538,000. Of this amount, 5,675,000