

STATEMENT OF HON. SAMUEL S. STRATTON, A REPRESENTATIVE  
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. STRATTON. Mr. Chairman, I am glad to be able to appear before the committee in behalf of legislation amending the tariff schedules with respect to the duty on whole mink skins.

I have long been concerned about the impact of foreign imports on our domestic mink industry, some of it located in my district, and strongly supported successful efforts in 1966 to retain funds for mink research to help promote favorable conditions for our home industry. I fully support the legislation introduced by Mr. Burke of Massachusetts, H.R. 6694; and Mr. Byrnes of Wisconsin, H.R. 10274. This legislation would limit mink imports entering the United States after January 1, 1968, to 40 percent of the estimated domestic consumption for the year and would call for a 50-percent duty on quantities in excess of that amount.

Few industries have been harder hit during the last few years than the American mink industry. It is in the area of raw or undressed mink skins that the domestic rancher is having his major problems, and there has been a steady erosion of the domestic producers' market until today the foreign mink raiser has over 40 percent of our domestic market. Taking the last few years as an example, imports in 1966 increased 16 percent over 1965, mainly from the Scandinavian countries which have claimed some 77 percent of total imports. Scandinavian countries have increased shipments to the United States by more than 23 percent in 1966 over 1965 and it has been estimated that 50 percent of American sellers will be forced out of business by the increasing imports unless some immediate action is taken to correct this situation.

About 500 mink ranchers go out of business each year or about 10 percent of the total domestic ranchers. In 1959 the Tariff Commission found that there were approximately 7,200 mink ranches in the United States; today according to statistics supplied by the National Board of Fur Farm Organizations there are only some 3,159 ranches still in existence, while imports during this period have been growing at a rate of about 14 percent annually. In 1965 in my home State of New York there were some 172 ranches, today there are only 117. It is the small family operator in particular that is bearing the brunt of these losses: U.S. Tariff Commission figures show that three ranches were found to be out of business in my district in October 1967; at least two ranchers in my district were forced out of business during the pelting season of December 1967 to January 1968, and at least three ranches were forced to drop out because of the loss of breeder females.

Mink ranching requires a relatively high capital investment, much of which is not convertible into other assets since there is almost no market for capital goods required for mink ranching. Thus when a ranch fails, it is not uncommon that the entire life savings of the husband and wife are wiped out. Capital investment in New York State in 1965 for 172 ranches amounted to over \$8 million with an average value per ranch of about \$49,000.

The average cost of production of one mink in the United States today is about \$18.25 which includes feeding and capital investment. As a result of the wave of excessive imports from 1966 continuing into 1967, the average market prices in the selling season of 1967