broke more than 28 percent, forcing the sale of the 1966 crop at a gross average of less than $14, a loss of more than $4 per skin.

Mr. Chairman, something must be done to protect our domestic mink market, developed largely through the hard work and money of the small mink rancher. We can give these ranchers the protection they deserve to compete for a fair share of the mink market, and at the same time help correct the serious balance-of-payments problem we are facing, by cutting down on U.S. expenditures overseas for mink skins, which incidentally have now reached an annual rate of over $73 million. We can do this by enacting the mink quota legislation. Mr. Chairman, I strongly urge the committee's favorable action on this vitally needed mink import control measure.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Stratton, for sharing your views with us today.

The next witness is our colleague from South Dakota, the Honorable Ben Reifel. Mr. Reifel, we appreciate having you with us and you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN REIFEL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. REIFEL. I am the sponsor of H.R. 11932 to amend the tariff schedule of the United States with respect to duty on whole skins of mink, whether or not dressed. This measure is similar to several other bills on this subject in that it would impose a 50-percent ad valorem duty whenever mink fur skin imports equal 40 percent of domestic consumption of such skins during a given year.

The South Dakota mink ranching industry ranks twelfth in the Nation. I have been contacted by many of these mink ranchers who are concerned about acute economic conditions in their industry. To a man, they blame these conditions on a mounting influx of foreign pelts, most of which are of an inferior quality.

They are competing against a foreign industry favored by labor rates less than half our own, utilizing mostly family labor, and with abundant sources of cheap feed. The result has been a reduction in South Dakota mink ranchers from over 100, 10 years ago, to 40 or so today.

Although they are few in numbers, these mink ranchers make a substantial contribution to the livestock industry in my State through their use of livestock by-products as feed.

The sale of livestock and livestock products accounts for over 70 percent of farm income in South Dakota. Last year depressed conditions in the mink market were directly responsible for a decline in sales of some 5 million pounds of livestock by-products at the Sioux Falls John Morrell & Co. plant as compared to the 1966 level.

I was among those who testified before the U.S. Tariff Commission last December. Unfortunately the Commission merely provided a report on conditions within the industry and failed to recommend any steps to control more effectively the mounting tide of mink fur skins coming into this country from abroad.

I do hope that your committee will be cognizant of the damage being inflicted upon a small but very important industry and will recommend legislation to help these producers compete more effectively.