STATEMENT OF HON. NICK GALIFIANAKIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Mr. GALIFIANAKIS. Mr. Chairman, the Fifth District of North Carolina, which I have the honor of representing, is not one of the large mink-producing districts in the United States, but there are sufficient ranches to make a rather good contribution to the agricultural economy of my district.

As you know, the National Board of Fur Farm Organizations has led the fight to get protection for the domestic mink ranchers from an influx of imports which have inundated the domestic mink ranching economy. They have had bills introduced to provide some degree of protection including H.R. 6694, introduced by the gentleman from Massachusetts, Congressman Burke. The bill would merely provide that up to 40 percent of the domestic consumption of mink pelts could be imported free of duty, thus saving 60 percent of the domestic market for domestic producers.

After a great number of bills had been introduced, the President requested the Tariff Commission to conduct an investigation of all aspects of the domestic mink ranching industry, especially the impact imports are having on domestic producers. The Commission's findings were rather inconclusive as to this particular aspect. They did acknowledge that imports are presently supplying between 50 and 53 percent of domestic consumption and did acknowledge that the number of ranchers in the United States has steadily declined since 1959, the date of the last Tariff Commission hearing, but did not conclude that ranchers were being driven out of business because of imports. To me, it is obvious that this is the case. In 1959, when the last hearing was held there were over 7,000 domestic mink ranchers and today, according to the national board there are only 3,159 remaining. It is not normal for profitmaking concerns to go out of business in such numbers and at such a rate.

The national board has also pointed out that while the numbers of ranches has declined to slightly over 3,100, domestic consumption has been going up at a rate of 9.2 percent per annum. However, domestic consumption has been going up at a rate of 10.7 percent per annum and imports have been increasing at a rate of 11.9 percent. Scandinavian exports to the United States have increased at a rate of 13.5 percent per annum. Thus, it is obvious that despite the fact more mink are being produced domestically with fewer ranches, those still in business are getting only a small proportion of the increase in domestic consumption.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that this phase of our agricultural economy is entitled to at least some degree of protection. Mink ranchers have not had nor do they generally want price supports. They have had very little support from their Federal Government except for some research projects. Surely, the least we can do is to provide them a fair share of the market which they developed with their own time and money. The various marketing associations have contributed over $1 million per year for over 20 years to the development of markets for mink. This money has been raised by voluntary contributions by the mink ranchers themselves. Now they are seeing that market being lost because of vast imports of low quality and low priced mink pelts.

I do hope that this committee will take the plight of the domestic