have produced larger quantities of commercial qualities, utilized substantially in the trimming trade in the United States and elsewhere. Literally millions of American women are now enjoying the luxury of mink-trimmed garments who could not have known mink had fur manufacturers had to rely solely on the domestic mink sales.

3. *The Controlled Price System of Selling.*—The domestic ranchers have marketed their products largely through mink auction houses at controlled prices. In other words, they have utilized a system under which their furs are withdrawn from the market or bought back by the ranchers for later sale if the price realized at auction is not to their liking. On the other hand, in the auctions of furs produced by the four Scandinavian countries, the policy has been to sell—except in emergency situations—all the mink that is offered by their farmers at the best price that can be obtained at open and free auctions which do not permit holdbacks or maintained prices.

4. *U.S. Skins Sold Dressed—A Disadvantage To The European Buyer.*—In the United States the domestic ranchers sell approximately 70% of all their production in the dressed state—hair-out—and the remaining 30% raw—leather-out. In Europe, 100% of all mink are sold raw—hair-out. You may ask why this makes a difference? The Italian and German buyers who constitute the major market in Europe prefer their own dressing processes and prefer to keep the dressing labor in their own domestic markets. Furthermore, in most countries there are import duties on dressed skins, some of which run as high as 38% *ad valorem*, whereas *raw mink skins are duty free in all countries.* In view of this fact it is hard to understand why domestic ranchers do not offer *raw* skins to European buyers, many of whom attend U.S. auctions.

5. *Interassorting and Sale of Strings.*—In the United States about 80% of our mink are sorted individually for each rancher and put on sale in the auction houses in small lots. In Europe 90% of the mink are interassorted—that is, small lots produced by individual ranchers offering made up of similar quality and color skins are put together in large lots, making it easier for the buyer to select the goods he needs in substantial quantities in a single purchase. Thus in the United States individual lots offered at auction at the major auction houses range from 25 to 70 skins. In Europe, interassorted lots range from 100 to 350, averaging approximately 200.

By reason of the advantages offered in Europe in the marketing of skins to buyers of substantial quantities, the attendance in Scandinavian auctions ranges between 150 to 250 buyers—while in the U.S. auctions 50 to 60 buyers would be a fair attendance.

The U.S. producers of this commodity have been blind to the needs of the manufacturers, dealers and brokers who buy their skins. It takes more time to sort and bundle dressed skins—as compared with raw skins. It costs more money. With auction catalogs in the United States a large buyer must have several men to inspect all the lots offered, whereas in European auctions the lots are larger and one buyer's representative can properly cover a catalog of half a million skins without difficulty.

In European auctions interassorted lots of skins are made up into "strings." The graders at the auction house assort the skins into strings by color and quality and display to potential buyers in advance of the auction a sample lot of the skins making up the string. A buyer can bid on the sample lot he inspected and buy an entire string of skins identical in quality and color to the sample lot, knowing that he will receive a relatively uniform quality and color without having to inspect in advance of the auction the large number of lots making up the string. A string in a European auction may be made up of as many as 5,000 uniform skins. As a result a large buyer in the European auctions will gladly pay a premium for uniformly assorted goods perfectly matched.

These are some of the marketing problems which have brought about the difficulties with which the domestic ranchers are faced—problems which have resulted at times in a more apathetic U.S. market than the Europeans have created.

In my opinion a substantial part of the problem the domestic mink ranchers have experienced may be blamed on marketing practices formulated by the ranchers in cooperation with major U.S. auction houses who sell about 80% to 90% of U.S. production. I am happy to report that the domestic mink ranchers' organizations are now making a serious reassessment of their marketing practices. They are attempting to determine whether these practices have served their best interests.