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Remarks regarding plywood imports

Strom Thurmond

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Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the body of the Record at the conclusion of my remarks the contents of a brief brochure entitled, "Import of Foreign Plywood." This brochure was prepared by our domestic plywood industry in an attempt to demonstrate to the American public the peril which faces the plywood and veneer industries as a result of increased competition of plywood imports from low-wage countries, principally Japan.

In a very few pages, this brochure tells the story of how these two important domestic industries have been adversely affected by increased imports. It cites facts and figures which show that foreign imports from all competing countries have increased 1,000 per cent since tariff reductions were effected on plywood and veneer products in 1951 and also that they have now reached the point where they constitute 46.6 per cent of the total plywood consumption in the United States.

During this same period, 1951 through 1956, imports from Japan have increased 4,120 per cent. As you know, in this country our plywood and veneer industries by law must pay their employees a minimum of one dollar per hour. In Japan, however, plywood workers sell their services to Japanese manufacturers at the rate of 11 cents per hour.

In order to save these two industries, which are vital to our nation in time of peace as well as in time of war, the answer lies
not in a wage scale reduction but rather the answer lies in a reasonable import quota which will afford these industries some measure of protection from low-wage competition.

Mr. President, I believe in reciprocal trade, and I believe free world trade must be fostered. At the same time, however, I do not believe that our domestic industries should be sacrificed upon the altar of so-called reciprocal trade.

I regret, Mr. President, that it is necessary to come to the Congress and ask for legislative quotas on the importation of foreign plywood. This is necessary, however, because administrative relief has been denied to our domestic plywood industry by the Tariff Commission. An escape clause complaint was filed by the plywood industry in 1955, but the Commission blamed the plywood problems in this period of economic prosperity on a business recession in 1954.

Mr. President, the plywood industry also tried to work out a system of voluntary quotas with the Japanese Government in 1955. A voluntary quota agreement was arranged, but the paper upon which it was written turned out to be of more value than the agreement, as has been the case in many of our agreements with foreign countries.

This brochure gives all the facts on this attempt to work with the Japanese in a section entitled appropriately, "The Quota That Wasn't There."

Mr. President, these industries need relief, and they need it now. Already plywood and veneer plants have closed down in a number of States, and even more have been forced to cutback on their working hours, thus throwing many American employees out of work and shifting
countless others to only part-time employment.

I am preparing a bill which I believe will provide some relief to these important industries. The Honorable John McMillan, dean of the South Carolina Congressional delegation, is also preparing similar legislation for introduction in the House. I hope that these legislative proposals, when introduced, will receive the full support of the Congress.

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