

Imports and Immigration

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It was with a sense of surprise and mild shock to some members of the audience at a session at the Medinah Clinic in December, when Ben Chlevin reported that the National Association had contracted with a Hong Kong manufacturer to furnish special identifying blazers to the Association members. Did just price, quality and service dictate this action? It is one of thousands of transactions of this nature which points up the problem the United States has with an adverse trade balance and dollar devaluation. Our stores are loaded with imported merchandise. Competition simply has forced them into this wholesale buying and stocking of imports to the exclusion of domestic manufacturers. Because wages are only about half of the American scale in West European countries, especially West Germany and one third of the U. S. scale in Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, U. S. Corporations have and are establishing branches overseas to produce goods then imported into the U. S. at one-half their domestic labor costs. This has helped to create the unemployment problem which we now have and is liable to be more or less a permanent barnacle to plague us in the future.

Take the case of automobile imports. With approximately 1,500,000 foreign cars imported into the United States annually, this represents over two billion dollars in wages and salaries which has been earned and paid to foreign labor, as well as taxes and cost items, by the American consumer. That sum would give jobs to a lot of unemployed. Multiply this tenfold by textiles, shoes, appliances, TV's and radios, cameras, electrical and industrial products too numerous to identify, and you have a problem which won't go away by itself.

Why are foreign nations still so anxious to export to the U. S. for dollars which are becoming less valuable all the time? Eventually they will buy American commodities for their dollar, fueling our inflation still more.

Thus by buying imports either in your professional capacity or your personal or family needs, you can contribute perhaps only in a small way, but we all owe our support to maintaining the American standard way of living and jobs for U. S. people.

Along with the flood of foreign goods entering the U. S. there is a flood of immigrants, many illegally, who add to our unemployment problems and to a certain extent to our adverse trade balance because they either send their earnings back to the country of their origin, or take it with them when they are expelled. The immigration bureau of our government can only partially police the thousands of miles of borders and expell illegally entered immigrants, who often work for sub-standard wages and who live under marginal living conditions. The golf course superintendents are contributing to and abetting this condition. For a number of years, when there was a labor shortage, there was an excuse for hiring immigrants for golf courses, landscape, truck farming, cemetery and unskilled factory labor. With the present unemployment problem the turf industry should favor domestic labor. The excuse that landscape maintenance operators generally gave, for not using more negro operators, was that their customers frowned upon or objected to them. The same excuse is used by golf course superintendents, that the golf players object. That attitude and excuse is invalid.

In Florida where most golfers are northerners in the winter time, they see only negro workmen on the golf courses.

For years it has been generally known that our Mexican and other latin Americans, as well as many orientals, send their wages home, or take their savings with them when they leave our country periodically, or at some time permanently. Our Justice Department recently had a case where an illegal Chinese immigrant had sent back sixty thousand dollars and took out forty thousand more when he was expelled. Not every immigrant is that frugal, but such an extreme example points up the problem.

It may involve some sacrifice to be patriotic in our buying and hiring but the time has come to look at problems from other than a dollar and cent point of view.

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One trouble with today's restive youth is that they can't remember anything back of 1955. A depression is something they've just read about, if that, and it doesn't sound like much in the telling.

But if you were there, today's life looks pretty good. Take my friend George, who worked in the woods during those years. He used to cut wood for less than \$1.00 a cord. Remember that a cord is a pile of wood four feet wide, four feet high, and eight feet long, and in this day cost about \$40. George had no chain saw and no tractor either. All he had was a one-man crosscut, double bitted axe, and a pair of oxen. With these he cut and pulled over a mile 15 cords of wood for a man who paid him \$13.50 (that's 90¢ per cord). The next winter the same man paid George \$10 for 12 cords, but by the winter of 1934 he told George he just couldn't afford it any more!

That was the bottom. From then on things picked up. In 1935 George got \$8 for working nine hours a day, six full days a week in a saw mill. Within a year or two minimum wage regulations came through that put his pay up to \$13 for a 40-hour week. "Gosh, how the boss howled." And things have improved steadily ever since. — United Business Service.

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