



## WASHINGTON REPORT

Congressman Edwin D. Eshleman

16th District—Pennsylvania



Our nation at this time faces a serious problem in the area of foreign trade. In recent years importation policies of the United States have created a condition of imbalance directly affecting our economy and placing undue burdens on our citizens. Immediate prospects are that the picture will get worse rather than better unless substantial changes are made.

The problem has arisen from a desire on the part of some government officials to aid other nations of the world by offering them favorable trade conditions in the United States. Tariffs have been lowered, and foreign goods have flooded our markets in a wide variety of categories. Our own industries are beginning to feel the undesirable effects of this policy. Our farmers have been particularly hard hit.

The House General Subcommittee on Labor, on which I serve, is conducting hearings on the impact of foreign imports into this country. We are receiving testimony from a wide range of experts representing industrial and agricultural interests.

Having personally observed, in our own 16th District, some of the objectionable results of our government's present import policy, I am hopeful the committee hearings will provide a basis for some general foreign trade reforms.

Problems created by the present policy in the watch industry in our own area were discussed in detail in this column several weeks ago. The watch industry, however, is only one example. Other enterprises such as the leather goods manufacturers, fisheries, iron and steel companies and food processors also have experienced difficulties in competing with cheaper imported goods.

Some firms have tried to meet the challenge by acquiring foreign subsidiaries. But such action can, in effect, export job opportunities to other countries and import unemployment to the United States.

One of our immediate concerns in this unfortunate situation is the plight of our farmers. The farmer has become a pawn in the foreign relations game. In recent months, imports of agricultural products have reached crisis proportions. The bottom is out of the milk market. Cattle prices are down 10 percent per hundredweight from the top prices paid to farmers in 1966; hogs, down 31 percent per hundredweight; chickens, down 11.5 percent per pound. Tobacco growers suffer because foreign tobacco is offered at prices lower than their production costs.

In the face of the agricultural import problem, about which the Department of Agriculture has done nothing significant, we now hear proposals

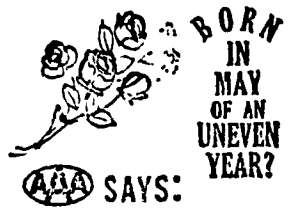
for a Common Market including Latin American growers who are now furnishing much of the import competition. Before we embrace such a concept, we must carefully consider what possible effects it could have in further aggravating the present crisis.

Prompt action would seem to be in order. Certain tariff rates should be raised to provide immediate relief for some of the more hard-pressed segments of our economy. I have introduced a bill to raise cigar tobacco import rates, and legislation designed to protect our farmers against the flood of dairy imports has my support.

In the industrial sector, the hearings before our Subcommittee should provide useful information for formulating feasible positions in areas be-

yond the watch tariff, on which my stand already has been defined.

Any positions taken will hopefully serve to promote the interests of the American businessman and farmer over his foreign competitor. Such steps will not be the final answer but are basic to resolving the serious import problems we face today.



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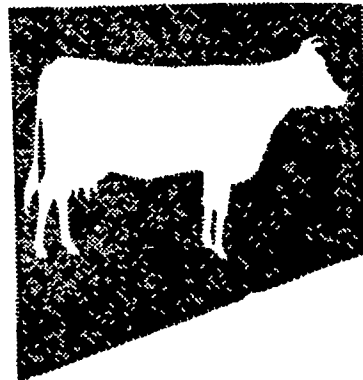
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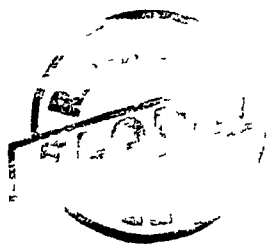
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