

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Is Your Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

Doomed? I don't think so.

How many times have you heard about the certain end to the hosiery business in America?

Do you believe it?

Frankly, if you're reading this article you do seriously believe that statement completely. If you did you would have already "folded your tent" and gotten another job. You certainly wouldn't read The Hosiery News.

There is no question that we are bombarded on all sides by cheaper imports, rising health-care costs, rising fuel costs, rising raw materials costs, and retailers who are only concerned about their margins and their jobs. But, if you compare us hosiery folks to some of the other textile businesses in America and the furniture business and the necktie business, the tobacco industry, U.S. auto industry and others – we're doing pretty well.

I know that many of our fellow manufacturers have closed their doors or had their doors closed for them, but there are still a lot of us making goods in our factories and many of both making and importing and others simply importing and though we might not be "setting the woods on fire," we're doing all right, thank you very much. Ingenuity plus real estate plus a workforce plus a desire to keep "doing something" is a formula for our ability and our reason to stay here.

How can we continue to succeed with declining consumption, the aforementioned rising costs, and price pressure? We can succeed by standing together, sharing ideas, educating each other to potential pitfalls, knowing regulations, discovering new ways to produce, to market, to distribute, to stay healthy, to conserve and by and encouraging each other. Even the simple things like golf tournaments and other social events keeps us in touch with each other so we can know that we are not in this alone and so we can have someone to talk with on a less than formal basis to "get help" or at least free advice.

THA is in place just for those reasons. We have an organization that is always there for us to use to coordinate our activities and to keep us working together for the benefit of every member and our industry collectively. We have a staff that will implement any program that enough people want them to implement. We have a board of directors made up of all kinds of companies who are trying to develop an organization that helps us and not one that just is just hanging on because it's been here for a hundred years.

Now I have been accused of being so optimistic that it borders on naivety – so be it. I'd rather look for a chance to succeed than to spend my time expecting the worst case any minute ahead. I also know from talking to many of you that you feel the same way. We get discouraged and we get downright fearful once in awhile but ultimately we stand back up -- together -- to be sure that we get another day to supply products and therefore jobs and therefore futures for countless employees and their families and ours.

I remember a quote by some wag during one of the recessions in our past – something along the lines of, "We heard there is a recession but we have decided not to participate." Let's take that same approach about the "certain end of the hosiery industry," let's decide not to participate and let's use THA to help us. And, let's encourage

non-members that we come in contact with to join us in the fight to survive – no – to prosper. By growing our numbers and therefore growing input we can build a better association – a better base on which we can continue to – well simply continue to continue.

One other subject I'd like to mention to you. I just read an article in Fortune about Wal-Mart, "The Green Machine." It is about Wal-Mart becoming environmentally sensitive and the impact those decisions can have on the environment and on their bottom line.

Maybe its time for THA to focus on those issues too. Global warming real or not -- politicized so that we believe or not -- depending on the messenger and not the message -- cannot be ignored. We certainly know that petroleum availability and therefore price has affected every single member of THA and that water and air pollution are a realities in many parts of where we live.

What do you think? Interested in being part of a group to determine what we might do as an industry to be "greener?" Want to know what our industry can do to lead this endeavor? If the answer is yes or maybe so, get in touch with me and let's figure out what we might do. I have talked with a couple folks like this and it is surprising how many things we are already doing and we simply need to "call then out."

United We Stand is not just a slogan to me. I believe that we can stand for a long time if we help each other stand. I believe completely that "a house divided will fall," and so I want to constantly remind you that we can help each other and that we should help each other. This helping should not be limited to ourselves, in my mind, it should be to everything and everybody that we affect or can affect.

Larry Small

