



Donald Clark, Sec.
Fed. Trade Comm.
6th St. & Penna. Ave NW
Rm 172
Wash. DC 10580

7-24-97

Dear Mr. Clark,

Enclosed is an article from my trade magazine that I hope the Commission will look into. I hope they do the right thing.

Very truly yours,
Richard Vollmer



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MADE IN THE USA? WELL MAYBE.

Made in the USA. Just a few clear, simple words that can only mean one thing. Look at what each word means. Made: built, constructed, the product of a unique blend of knowledge, craftsmanship, and sweat. In: here; one place. The USA: the greatest country the world has ever known; our country. Guess what? That simple phrase, Made in the USA, might mean nothing by the end of the year.

Nothing? That's right. Made in the USA, the phrase that we have all looked for on products throughout our entire lives, the label that sits right next to our union label, will mean nothing if the Federal Trade Commission has its way. It's a sad story of corporate greed, the exporting of jobs, and a federal agency gone very, very wrong.

The Federal Trade Commission is the agency which has responsibility for overseeing business in the USA. It sets standards in interstate trade, oversees regulations, and makes policy. One of the things which it has always been responsible for is making sure that the Made in the USA label only appears on items that were assembled in the USA of American parts.

Of course, the truth isn't always something that the American consumer can expect from the government or big business. How many times have we been fed half truths by some corporate spokesman or a bureaucrat more interested in his or her job than in our best interests? That is what is

happening here, right now. Big business has decided that the Made in the USA label doesn't have to mean what it says. In their opinion, Made in the USA means that at least some part of a product was actually made here, maybe out of materials produced in Japan or Thailand. It's the best of both worlds for the huge multi-national corporations: they get to dump fairly paid, union represented American workers off of their payrolls, hire people in Asia or Central America to do our jobs for two dollars a day, and then bring the partially finished product back to the USA to be completed by part time or poorly paid, non-union workers while still telling us that their product is Made in the USA. They want to turn the badge of pride which is affixed to American products into one more form of Corporate Welfare.

According to a draft proposal put out by the FTC, products which are "substantially" made here would be able to sport the Made in the USA label. "Substantially" made here? What is that supposed to mean? How is substantially different from "partially" made here? Or from "somewhat" made here? Or, how about, from "Not really Made in the USA, but we would like the extra money we could make if you think it is"? Sure, the label would have to be bigger, but the company could afford it. After all, they would have saved all that money on paying their unionized American employees.

Think about it. A sneaker company tells you that their products are the best in the world, that the women stitching together their shoes in Indonesia do just as good a job as American workers for the two or three dollars a day that they are paid. Yet, they still want to put a "Made in the USA label on their shoes. What does this mean? It means that they acknowledge that a product made here by fairly compensated workers is superior to one made by grossly underpaid people somewhere else. They know that if their shoes were made in America, they would be of a better quality, and that they would have been made at a fair, realistic price to the company. They don't want that extra responsibility, but they want you to think that they have undertaken it anyway. And now they have seemingly convinced the Federal Government that they should be able to misrepresent their products, too.

It's just plain wrong, and we have to do something to stop it. Once again, the responsibility for preserving one of this country's greatest institutions has fallen on us, the people who affix the Union Label and the Made in the USA label to the pieces which we build. Left to their own devices, Corporate America and the Federal Trade Commission would take this symbol of American pride and turn it into just another corporate logo. Just do it. Made in the USA. Oh what a feeling, Toyota. What a shame.

There is a way, howev-

er, for us to fight this outrage, this cheapening of who we are and what our flag stands for. The FTC will be accepting comments on the proposed changes in the Made in the USA regulations until August 1st of this year. I don't think I have to tell you what your comments should be, but I'll tell you what mine are. Outrage. Disgust. Sorrow. Anger.

Write to the FTC, and do it today. Don't put it off and say that you'll get to it. This is too important. This is about some corporate honcho in Tokyo or Berlin telling you what it is to be American. A simple letter to the FTC, telling them how you feel, will make a difference. Letters from everyone who sees this article and from your neighbors, friends, and families will make a bigger difference. Too many of us have worked too long producing things Made in the USA to simply give in to this corporate raid.

Send your letters to:

Secretary Donald Clark
Federal Trade Commission
6th St & Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.,
Room 172
Washington, D.C. 10550

We all know what it means to be Made in the USA. Who knows, maybe the FTC just isn't upon its geography. Remind them that products made in Georgia, California, Missouri, New York, or Michigan are made in the USA. Products made in Dakota, Bangkok, Shanghai, Managua, or Mexico are not. It's simple, really. As simple as those four little words, Made in the USA.