
Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries



President's Column

Bill Schapiro

Life Without SMART: Something to Consider

In the classic movie "It's a Wonderful Life", Jimmy Stewart was about to end his life when an angel appeared and showed him how valuable he had been to others in his life.

In this same way, SMART. sometimes plays a role in our lives we don't always see or appreciate. For instance, let's suppose a wiper dealer in the United States decides to import a load of uncut wipers from a Canadian grader. Unexpectedly, the U.S. Customs seizes the container because, under present interpretations of classification 6309 or 6310, "worn clothing" must be "unwearable" to enter the U.S. duty free.

Our wiper dealer is now told that he must declare country of origin (which is impossible, as we know, for used clothing) and then he must pay a duty on the clothing as if it were new. Both the U.S. wiper dealer and the Canadian grader find themselves in big trouble. What could they do? How could they fight this serious threat to their business?

Let's say things get worse. Maybe six months later, U.S. graders and Canadian graders arrive at work only to receive some very bad news: East African and West African countries are going to raise duties on what they shipped by 100 percent. The reason, of course, is that these countries are now applying the U.S. definitions of "worn clothing" to what will be shipped, and what will be shipped is not "worn clothing" by these standards. Now, since it is now defined as something better than "worn clothing," it will be subject to higher duties.

In this hypothetical situation, the U.S. wiper dealer, the U.S. grader and the Canadian grader don't have to face a

nightmare like this alone. They would be fortunate to have an organization like SMART. to turn to when they have to fight the difficult challenges this industry often faces.

While the above situation is hypothetical, in the real world, you should know that on May 8th, 2006, SMART filed a request to Customs to modify its interpretation of "worn clothing" from what amounts to "unwearable" to a more realistic definition. Most members have no idea of the amount of work that SMART members put into this document.

Jerry Usatch was in charge of organizing SMART's response. Sunny Hull and Bernie Brill produced impassioned pleas from Goodwill organizations to support our cause. I enlisted the help of a friend who is an award winning photographer to produce photographs to buttress our case. Ed Stubin provided actual samples, definitions, and detailed descriptions of what used clothing really is. Jerry Usatch, along with Don Cantrell obtained technical definitional letters from expert faculty at Philadelphia University and Clemson University respectfully.

Call or email SMART's office if you want us to e-mail you a copy of our submissions to Customs. It is really a testament to the great volunteerism that is the hallmark of the history of this great organization.

We don't know how Customs will rule on our appeal to their current interpretation of subheading 6309. But, what we do know is that, whatever the result, we have an organization to support us in whatever battles lay ahead. Similar to what Jimmy Stewart found out in "It's a Wonderful Life", we should realize how valuable SMART. is to us and help build our organization by increasing membership and supporting the causes we fight. From our battle with U.S. EPA., to this current fight with Customs, we all must realize what an important resource we have in SMART.
