

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



President's Column

Bill Schapiro

“If You Want Me, Please Marry Me”

I find it very challenging, even fun, to get new members. First, I know how important it is for all of us: strength in numbers means more funds to fight our battles (i.e. EPA and U.S. Customs) and more companies with whom we can network. And our \$1,000 incentive program is still in effect and is a powerful recruiting tool.

But sometimes the challenge can be both interesting and frustrating. In mid- August someone I know in the business had a very bad week. His container of used clothing was assessed a duty and penalties of \$6,000 because U.S. Customs, under present interpretations, determined the clothing he imported was not “worn enough” to be imported duty free under Harmonized Code #6309 as “worn clothing.”

My friend simply was inconsolable. “How can this be?” he said. “If this merchandise is not considered worn, then what is it? It clearly isn't new and yet it is being assessed a duty as if it were, how can U.S. Customs be so wrong,” he was screaming at me on the phone. I had to remind him that he was preaching to the choir.

I went on to explain to my friend that SMART has brought our case on this issue before U.S. Customs and lost it against all reason. Since we also were denied on appeal, our next move was to approach Congress and eventually have legislation introduced to resolve this problem. I told him this is an important battle and that is why we are lucky to have an organization to represent this often misunderstood industry.

Next, my friend was even angrier and more frustrated because he felt a well-known shipping company had taken advantage of his misfortune at customs and overcharged him for demurrage. In his words, e-mailed to the offending company, “This is simply and purely the attitude of a gangster or robber...I will tell the association (called SMART) that influences a big part of the used clothing business in the United States and Canada to tell their members to avoid dealing with your company if they have the choice...”

And here is the great irony! This is from a non-member, evoking the name of our great organization!!!

Now this e-mail shows how vital it is that we all have an association to represent us. As you can see as soon as the small guy feels abused by the system, he wants to turn to strength in numbers. He wants and needs SMART.

Yes, Bernie and I have both called and written my poor and angry friend in the hope he will join. But it amazes me sometimes how hard we have to work to convince the many prospects I know are out there, how crucial it is that they join us in our important mission of promoting and protecting our industry.

Unlike the case of my friend, let's hope it doesn't take a disaster to get these prospects on board with us. We have 222 members...only 78 left to reach our goal. With those numbers, SMART can fight our fights and have all the networking opportunities we could want.

I want to thank all of you who are out there helping us get our new recruits. You are doing the new member and SMART a great service.
