

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

As required by Section 203(b)(2) of the Trade Act of 1974, I am transmitting this report to the Congress setting forth my determination to provide adjustment assistance to the U.S. footwear industry producing footwear covered by the affirmative finding of February 20, 1976 of the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) under section 201(d)(1) of the Trade Act. As my decision does not provide import relief to that industry, I am setting forth both the reasons why I have determined that import relief is not in the national economic interest and other actions I am taking to help the footwear industry and workers.

I have decided, considering the interests of both the American consumers and producers, that expedited adjustment assistance is the most effective remedy for the injury to the U.S. footwear industry and its employees as a result of imports.

My decision was based upon my evaluation of the national economic interest. A remedy involving import restraints would have lessened competition in the shoe industry and resulted in higher shoe prices for American consumers at a time when lowering the rate of inflation is essential. Footwear makes up 1-1/2 percent of the Consumer Price Index.

Import restraints would also have exposed industrial and agricultural trade to compensatory import concessions or retaliation against U.S. exports. This would have been detrimental to American jobs and damaged U.S. exports.

Adjustment assistance will benefit the many smaller enterprises which have been seriously injured, whereas the USITC report casts grave doubt on import relief as an effective remedy for these firms; import relief would disproportionately benefit the 21 larger firms which produce 50% of domestic output, but which have been found to be competitive with imports.

Adjustment assistance is consistent with the President's efforts to control inflation, including costs to all consumers, which import restrictions would raise.

The U.S. footwear industry is benefitting from a substantial increase in production, shipments, and employment as a result of the economic recovery. Additionally, a number of plants have reopened, order backlogs of domestic manufacturers have increased, and profitability has improved.

more

As the U.S. economy recovers from the recession, domestic production of nonrubber footwear is rising significantly. In February, 1976 (the latest month for which data are available) the output was 41,137,000 pairs. This is up from 40,985,000 in January, and is the highest monthly production figure since May, 1974. The monthly average for 1976 to date is 41,106,100; for the year 1974, 37,750,000; for 1975, 36,143,000.

U.S. employment in the industry, which has also been steadily declining over recent years, also shows signs of picking up. The total average monthly employment for the industry in 1975 was 163,000 workers, compared to 178,000 for the year 1974. For the first two months of 1976 the monthly average is 172,000 the highest since July, 1974.

Meanwhile, imports of the nonrubber footwear covered by the USITC recommendation (all except zoris and paper slippers) have been leveling off. In February, 1976, there were 29,238,000 pairs, down from 32,200,000 in January.

In considering the effect of import restraints on the International economic interests of the United States, as required by the Trade Act of 1974, I have concluded that such restraints would be contrary to the U.S. policy of promoting the development of an open, nondiscriminatory and fair world economic system. The goal of this policy is to expand domestic employment and living standards through increased economic efficiency.

I have directed the Secretaries of Commerce and Labor to give expeditious consideration to any petitions for adjustment assistance filed by footwear firms producing articles covered by the USITC report, and their workers. I have also instructed the Secretaries to file supplementary budget requests for adjustment assistance funds, if necessary, to carry out my program.

I have also directed the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations to monitor U.S. footwear trade, watching both the levels and quantities of imports as well as of domestic production and employment. If significant changes occur, they will be reported to me with appropriate recommendations.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
April 16, 1976

#