



Good buy America— or goodbye, America?

I recently received a request from a member asking that I write an article about “buying American” when we shop. While far from an expert on the subject, I am a concerned American citizen when I purchase goods.

As a union member, my first choice is to buy union-made products if available, because I know that union membership usually equates to better pay and benefits than non-union jobs in the same field. This is problematic when it comes to clothing since there are so few union-made garments out there. I know from experience that King Louie garments are union made, but its product line is restricted. When I cannot find the union label on a garment, I revert to Choice 2, which is “Made in USA.” My thought process is that perhaps this will help support more American workers and perhaps even a union facility someday.

Most things that we purchase can be found American made if we just look. The next time you reach for an item, regardless of what the item is, check where it was made. If it is not American made, look elsewhere in that department/area. Most always, a similar—or in some cases, the identical item—can be found on an adjacent shelf with a union label or a “made in America” annotation on it. It may take you a while to find American-made products, but isn’t it worth an American job? Some, if not a majority, of the current downtrend in our mail can be traced to the economy. If we improve America’s economy, we will undoubtedly improve the USPS’ financial position as well.

What can we do? As alluded to earlier, first and foremost, always check the label to see where the product you are purchasing was made. If you cannot find an American-made version of what you’re looking for, let your retailer know that you would prefer a “made in America” option. Companies listen to dollars, and if you’re not willing to purchase products made overseas, companies will bring manufacturing back to the United States.

One choice that I made years ago was to shun any product from Nike. I refuse to buy or to wear any item with its logo. If it was received as a gift, rest assured that it was regifted to my less discerning friends. (Yes, I have two; of course, they don’t know about each other.)

This decision was generated during the Michael “Air

Jordan” shoes decision of 1984. For those too young to remember, Nike paid this recently drafted athlete \$2.5 million to endorse its shoes (which later grew to \$25 million per year). While a relatively small sum in today’s market, it was at the time a huge sum for an athletic personal services contract. After the company paid this to Jordan, and sold \$130 million worth of shoes, it relocated its manufacturing to a third-world company paying poverty level wages to the workers. It subsequently relocated to another country when the wages approached (if I remember correctly) 70 cents per day. Nike’s later 2001 endorsement deal with new PGA member Tiger Woods, for \$100 million, also showed no concern by the company for the workers who made the products. Give me a King Louie garment anytime, and it usually costs less.

If you are truly interested in helping American workers, here are some websites that will provide union-and/or American-made products. Happy hunting.

- Americanworking.com—provides a list of American made producers
- Madeinusa.org
- Buyamericanproducts.org
- Theunionshop.org
- Unionsmart.org
- Unionmade.com
- Allamericanclothingcompany.com

By the time this publication is received, the 68th national convention will be a few weeks away. I hope that each delegate has a safe journey to Minneapolis and arrives ready to continue the work of this union. While we continue to fight to protect the USPS from the privateers and, in some cases, those inside ready to downsize, we must also be about the continued strengthening of our union. May the summer be bright and enjoyable for all. ✉

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