

Before the  
U.S. International Trade Commission

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Diffusion-Annealed Nickel-Plated Flat-Rolled Steel Products from  
Japan

Inv. No. 731-TA-1206 (Final)  
USITC Hearing – April 1, 2014

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Statement of Tom Jones

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Good morning. My name is Tom Jones and I am President of the United Steel Workers Local 3523 at Thomas Steel Strip Corporation in Warren, Ohio. I'd like to start by thanking the Commission for visiting our mill and for giving organized labor the opportunity to speak here today.

I've been with Thomas Steel for almost 25 years now and for the past five years I've worked on the entry end of the Pickle Line, which is the very start of our operation. I'm also qualified to work as the Operator on the same unit. I understand that your plant tour started at this point in our operation. Before working on the Pickle Line I worked on the Hot Band Slitter, which is in the same area, for 13 years. The last six of which I was the Operator.

When I started at the mill in 1989, we had approximately 450 hourly workers and over 250 salaried employees, that's over 700 positions, all of which were good paying jobs with good benefits. Today we have about 250 hourly and salaried employees total.

The hourly workforce at Thomas Steel takes great pride in the work they do, we are a specialty strip mill that performs high-quality work and we're good at it. None of the other mills that I have had the opportunity to visit in our area perform the same type of work that we do. It is high-end work that requires highly skilled personnel. Because we are responsible for the quality of our product, we do not outsource any part of our operation. Even our maintenance is done in house by highly-skilled Trade and Craft Journeyman employees. My point is that everything is done under one roof.

There is a process in place now at Thomas Steel called the "Daily Management Board." This is a meeting where the workers can interact with Management if they have ideas or suggestions for improvements on everything from the processing of the material to what maintenance tasks should take priority on the unit. I have always stressed to our membership to

take ownership in what they do – if we make a poor product, in the end the Company will not need us and there certainly would not be any need for the Union at that point. We do take ownership of our work and we relay this to Management. The Daily Management Board meetings give us an even greater opportunity to do just that; take pride AND ownership in what we do every day.

I became Union President in May of 2009, about the same time that William Boyd became President of Thomas Steel. This was a difficult time as our business volume fell off sharply; I myself was laid off for 14 weeks in 2009 in the wake of the volume losses that we suffered. These losses also led to several retirements throughout 2008 and 2009, and those jobs were not replaced. We began using voluntary layoffs so the younger employees could keep working, but there were several times in 2009 when the whole mill was laid off; that is there was no production whatsoever. That hadn't ever happened in my time at the mill.

Since then, we haven't been able to hire as many people as we've wanted. We're down to about 190 hourly people now and I expect us to lose

close to 10% of that number this year alone. Unless the business volume is there, we're not going to be able to replace those employees.

A shrinking workforce, or an underused workforce, not only affects the people at Thomas Steel but it impacts community as a whole. Warren, Ohio has two steel mills that you toured last week. As recently as 2012, we had a third steel maker in town. That business went bankrupt. Our community has already suffered the effect of import competition.

Anytime I don't have extra money in my pocket because I'm not working enough hours, that's money that is not spent in the community. It doesn't go to the local tax base or to support the schools, it doesn't go to the lady who cuts my hair or the local diners who make their living off our so-called disposable income. Most people probably don't understand this, but there is a tremendous impact beyond just the workers. Every dollar not made in our community has a negative impact that affects everybody.

This is a job where you could have one person in the household working, have two or three kids, and still have a comfortable life. You won't live in a mansion, but it will sustain a good middle-class life. We get paid

holidays and vacations. We have a good health care plan and a good pension. Our jobs at the mill are the prototype “middle class” jobs that the politicians so often talk about.

If we keep losing manufacturing jobs to low-priced imports, we will lose those middle class jobs, and the middle class as a whole. To quote former governor of Ohio, Jim Rhodes; “we all can’t cut each other’s hair”. We cannot be solely a service based economy; somebody has to produce an actual product. Unless these unfair imports stop, it will only contribute to the squeezing of the middle class. I work for a living and I want to continue to do so. I want to do it for a wage that lets me keep my house, drive my car, keep food on the table, and help my daughter when she needs it. I, along with everyone else at the mill, want to provide for my family. Everybody should be able to do that. For these reasons, I ask that the Commission to relieve our industry from the effects of unfair trade.

Again, I thank you for your time.