

Subject: : Gear Talk

Topic: : Made in America or

Re: Made in America or

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URL:

My dad worked for a Pennsylvania plant that had a Detroit headquarters. It was a bearing company in Lancaster and he was quality control manager. The plant produced very high quality bearings.

During the late 1970s there was a major exodus of businesses from the "rust belt" to the U.S. South.

As quality control manager, Dad made a trip to China on behalf of the company - I forget if it was still during the 1970s, or was just early 1980s - but he returned with the conclusion that bearings made there would never be able to compete and would never achieve similar quality.

He was very confident in the company because it produced top of the line product and, as he said, "We will always need the wheel."

However, his company's customers - auto and machinery manufacturers - didn't care about the quality the bearings, only the price. As it was, the quality bearings would last longer than the machines that needed wheels, and the end users - driven by competitive conspicuous consumption - didn't hang on to their purchases for more than a year or two. They certainly didn't have their local mechanic make any major repairs. That's still pretty much a hobbyists realm.

There was a new model every year to impress the neighbors and potential mating partners. (Remember Lee Iacocca and understand what he really achieved).

The bearing company built a new plant near Lititz and soon thereafter folded.

Similar stories were true across the industrial community.

The same is true for lots of high quality equipment and machinery formerly manufactured in the states and in WWII allied nations - radio tubes, fishing rods, reels, screws, etc.

Vietnam was over and federal government contracts and the higher quality demands diminished.

Further, quality was also sacrificed to help overcome imbalanced labor and materials costs to continue feeding the endlessly hungry cow birds in the nest called investors.

The moral of the story:

An quality educated consumer supports a quality producing business.

We ain't got it so we ain't getting it.

On the other hand, compared to 50 years ago, even today's low to low middle income consumers live vastly

better in every way except for access to quality environment and freedom of pedestrian movement and personal choice.