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



President's Column

Bill Schapiro, SMART President

“Time for Houston to Unite”

The action was fast and furious. In late September, a member noticed a news item that textile manufacturing interests were pushing for bans of second hand clothing to Uganda. Government Affairs Director Jessica Franken sent an e-mail to John Finn, Textile Trade Officer at the Department of State and received a prompt response. Our embassy, she was told, is aware of the proposals and will track the issue for us and express concern at the appropriate level.

If SMART did nothing more than represent the interests of our industry with governments and the press worldwide, I would be a member and would gladly pay double our present dues. Of course, SMART does so much more, with online trading, SORT's freight rates and our great networking



opportunities. But this is an industry of small business owners and if we don't combine our assets, we can be in danger of being ignored, misunderstood and over-powered by governments and special interests.

We presently have ten (10) members from the Houston grading community, even though there are at least twice as many companies in that city who ply our trade. So while I am sure that each and every one of the current SMART members in the Houston area is pleased to know we have an organization that “goes to war” for our industry when it

is threatened, I want to challenge our Houston members to lobby other companies in their area to join SMART. The more members we have, the more clout we will have, the more networking opportunities will arise, and all of us will benefit.

Only four years ago we had a handful of members in the Toronto grading community. When a potential problem with Custom duties arose in Tanzania, our Canadian companies joined en masse. Since then the Toronto Regional Meeting has been a lively event attended by more than 100 industry members. And now, the annual convention is planned for Toronto in 2009.

Our Houston regional meetings too, have become a welcome tradition drawing more than 60 people the past few years. But I think Houston can do even better. It is a vibrant community of secondhand clothing dealers and I would like to see our Houston members help us get a record crowd and increase our membership in that area by a substantial number of new recruits.

I encourage members to call any prospects and invite them to the November 7th Houston meeting. Or give the prospect's name to the SMART office so we can make contact and extend an invitation to join us.

We never know when a government, including our own, will misunderstand us or be influenced by interests that see what we do as a threat. Houston is a very exciting area for our industry with some great companies. Let's do all we can do draw on the strengths we have in that community and make this a record crowd.

I hope to see you and some hot new prospects in Houston on November 7th.
