

→ Manufacturing

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A Thriving Nation

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed December “Made in America Month.” It’s something few people may know or remember, but as a staunch advocate for all things Made in America, I find the simple fact that nearly 30 years ago our president chose to proclaim the year’s biggest shopping month Made in America Month to be hugely significant.

Recall that during this time in American history, the U.S. automobile market was facing its biggest challenge to date. Our Big Three automakers found themselves outpriced and outdesigned by the imported car influx. Americans were unhappy with the quality and/or design of American automobiles, gravitating toward the more economical, stylish imports flooding our shores.

President Reagan saw this crisis unfolding and took action.

What happened next is what I find interesting — or maybe the most disturbing. Given the proclamation’s context and content, why didn’t retailers and media pick up on this great opportunity? Use this proclamation as a “marketing” idea similar to Valentine’s Day or Mother’s Day to drive traffic? Very little attention was paid to the proclamation. In fact, it almost seems as though it was suppressed, neglected and ignored.

Why? Is it not sexy enough? Do big retailers not see the inherent marketing opportunity to increase sales, drive traffic and create additional



promotions? I find this fascinating and think we must examine and question why Made in America is not commonly promoted.

I believe that President Reagan saw the writing on the wall. He saw that if the United States of America did not take proactive action to protect challenged industries from outside imports, many of our industries would die and disappear. Look, for example, at the American toy industry. Gone. Only five percent of toys are manufactured in the United States today, and there are countless other American industries that have all but disappeared from our national manufacturing landscape.

Free markets can compete in a global economic environment that is fair. But, with so many variables — cost of labor, materials, environmental regulations and taxes — the global playing field can quickly become skewed, and first-world economies cannot compete with third-world economies.

Henry Ford knew that manufacturing and innovation were critical to a thriving nation. He is one of the founding fathers of an industry that stands as a testament to American innovation, drive and determination. Reagan fought hard to protect that ideal, and we now have that choice presented directly in front of us again.

Made in America — it stands for more than jobs. It stands for pride, it represents our history as a nation, and it is the fabric that created a thriving middle class and innovation that has stood the test of time. Made in America is who we are. We are not a nation of takers, but a nation of makers. It is just what we do. ●



JULIE REISER, founder of Made in USA Certified in Boca Raton, Florida, is a leading voice in the conversation for why manufacturing in the United States is key to America getting back to work. She is a nationally recognized writer, speaker and TV correspondent advocating on behalf of U.S. manufacturers, producers and service providers.