

Did You Know?

“Tariif Commission Investigates Match Industry,” *United States Tobacco Journal*, Volume 89, 1910:

The United States Tariff Commission has just completed an investigation of the match industry. Some of the facts ascertained are:

The war has cut off imports of muriate of potash, an essential ingredient in match composition. Before the war the American match industry was dependent upon Germany for potash but the domestic supply is now sufficient for this use. The domestic production of matches in 1914 was 20,305,000 gross valued at \$12,566,000. It is estimated that the output in 1917 amounted to 28,805,000 gross.

The most serious foreign competition has been from Sweden and Japan. Japan increased her exports to the U. S. from \$22,797 in 1914 to \$890,374 in 1917. The value of Sweden's exports to us increased from \$473,628 to \$820,827 during the same time. Sweden's proximity to Germany gives her an ample supply of potash, and her nearness to Russia gives her advantages in the acquisition of suitable wood for the match-stick. Japan is both a producer and an exporter of potash, and has an abundant supply of match-stick wood and cheap skilled labor.

The import of matches from Japan was restricted by the War Trade Board on April 15, 1918 for the purpose of making additional shipping available for direct military uses. Until it becomes possible to relax these restrictions imports will practically cease.

Labor is cheaper in foreign countries than in the United States but the machinery and equipment employed in this country for match production is generally superior to that in operation abroad.

According to official Japanese publications, there were 21,357 persons engaged in the Japanese match industry in 1915. Of this number, 73 per cent. were females. The employment of women in the United States is limited to the occupation of packer, wrapper and slider. In 1914 women constituted 30 per cent. of the total persons engaged in the American industry. In Japan most of the work in the production of matches is done in the homes of the workers, the children and both parents contributing to the output.

Recent tests made by the Bureau of Standards and the National Board of Fire Underwriters resulted in the finding that the Japanese match is inferior in quality to either the Scandinavian or American match and that in respect to fire hazard the Japanese product is the more dangerous.

Prices for the best grade of double-impregnated matches from Japan have increased from \$12 to \$13 per case of 50 gross of boxes, f.o.b. Kobo, before the war to as high as \$23.50 in March 1917. Increased cost of production in Japan is due to the advanced cost of potash and other ingredients.

Since July 1, 1913, no white phosphorus or poisonous matches have been made in the United States. On this date Congress placed an internal revenue tax on matches containing white phosphorus which was purposely made so high as to be prohibitory and force the use of a substitute. This was done on account of the poisonous character of white phosphorus. The tax placed upon them was so high that white and yellow phosphorus soon fell into disuse as an ingredient of the match. [<https://books.google.com/books?id=w31BAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA3-PA44&lpg=RA3-PA44&dq=Match+industry+in+U.S.&source=bl&ots>]