

December 14, 1998

The Honorable Albert Gore  
Vice President  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I am deeply concerned with the crisis facing the U.S. steel industry caused, to a large extent, by the ever rising tide of steel imports from around the world. According to U.S. steelmakers, during the first seven months of this year, steel imports were up 374 percent from Indonesia, 130 percent from Japan, 122 percent from Russia, 120 percent from Australia, 93 percent from Korea, 57 percent from India and 52 percent from the Ukraine. The domestic industry estimates that steel imports could reach a record 35 million tons this year.

The impact of these massive imports on the U.S. steel business has been dramatic. At Weirton Steel, for example, the dumping of foreign steel has pushed prices down twenty-five percent. Weirton Steel orders for new steel are down by forty percent. In November, the company laid off 342 employees. On December 3, the plant announced a second round of lay offs, to take effect two weeks before Christmas, of 415 employees.

Similar situations are occurring in other steel communities across the country. The industry reports that as many as 5,000 steelworkers nationwide have been laid off since September, and some analysts estimate that 10,000 more could lose their jobs before the end of the year.

We are facing a full-fledged crisis in the U.S. steel industry, no less critical than the financial problems faced by other Nations around the world. In that regard, as you are well aware, the recently enacted Fiscal Year 1999 Omnibus Appropriation Act contained some \$18 billion in funding for the International Monetary Fund to assist these ailing Nations in Asia and elsewhere. Additionally, and very importantly, that Act included some \$6 billion to provide Emergency Disaster Assistance payments to ranchers and farmers across America.

Furthermore, I have been made aware of the fact that the Administration intends to request some \$1.8 billion in its upcoming FY 2000 budget for additional financial support for the Middle East Peace process. Of that amount, apparently some \$1.2 billion will be requested for additional military assistance for Israel, together with some \$400 million in economic support funds for the Palestinians, and \$200 million in military assistance to Jordan. I am also advised that the Administration is preparing an Emergency Disaster Assistance package for Central America that would total some \$500 million.

Mr. Vice President, I urge you in the strongest terms, to give urgent consideration to the inclusion in your Fiscal Year 2000 budget of an appropriate emergency relief package for the U.S. steel industry. That package should include a request for additional funds wherever necessary in existing programs as well as the creation of any new programs that could be of assistance to American steelworkers and to the U.S. steel industry.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Byrd

RCB:bb