



The wave of insularity that seems to be sweeping the world at the moment could perhaps, in time, lead to countries re-establishing their own tanneries and finished product factories on the back of a new 'buy local' movement.

David Peters, DLP Advisors
Dlpeters99@gmail.com



Slumber party

We are entering the summer doldrums or perhaps the twilight zone when what may appear obvious is really an illusion. Hide prices at best are stagnant and lack the required trading intensity for any significant upward move. While initial reports of increased foot and web traffic for back-to-school shoe sales are positive indicators, leather remains an underutilised substrate. Auto-sales, while trending lower, continue to represent an avenue of optimism. With the manufacturers gearing up for new model introductions, pipelines are being filled so auto-leather guys are happy. The furniture business inspired by a decent real estate market is good and associated leather suppliers are reasonably satisfied with their orders. Summer is here, hot and in many parts humid; it's time to relax and ponder the future and take a snooze and dream.

Once upon a time in a land far, far away, there was a bountiful supply of shoes made entirely from leather and all being produced at a factory near you. The high street was bustling with individual shopkeepers where the local patrons were all known by their names. These were the best of times. How happy we all were to live in this localised world discovering new and exciting opportunities delivered by the local paper boy, cinematic newsreels or at your local place of worship and pub. Our homogeneous neighbourhoods were safe havens with deep roots in society.

Suddenly storm clouds began to develop followed by strange visitors to our shores all apparently from the planet Wal-Mart. They brought new and different products, from iPhones to lightweight sneakers, and all at prices lower than the local shoe store's. Our world was changing and we felt helpless and lost. All we could do was admire the wide selection of products being offered and be amazed at the low prices quoted. Our choice of stores was also in a state of flux as new shopkeepers now described as retailers, set up business in large park-like settings complete with playgrounds and a multitude of cheap eateries. We spent most of our weekend jumping from store to store buying all kinds of merchandise and eating till we became obese, because it was cheap. We grew dependent on our personal communication devices and used emojis to graphically describe our feelings to our friends and ourselves. We had confidence that we could purchase anything we wanted because it was inexpensive. We knew we were happy because everywhere we went we were having a nice day and everyone was smiling and

we could watch our favourite movie on giant TV screens that hung from our walls. Our addiction to leather shoes and handbags needed satisfying and not with an oriental country-of-origin tag.

We were always impressed with European leather and shoe-making expertise; we knew that shoes made in Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain were stylish and long-lasting with the corresponding leather produced from local hides in tanneries that predated the turn of the century. These skills were traded for cost saving opportunities encouraged by Asian enterprises. Those countries with a proud leather tradition fell into despair and a grey smog of helplessness descended upon the land. Out of work and lacking hope, the populous chose government dependency for their future. They turned to the central administration, located in Brussels, for relief.



CREDIT: EVERETT COLLECTION



Friends in neighbouring states encouraged the people to seek opportunities in different cities and different lands, and so the migration began. But this vision was now becoming terrifying as friends became competitors, encroaching was the norm and relationships turned sour: an uprising began to take root as each parish, community and district turned insular and protective of their domain. A revolution was formed and on one small island, with its own tradition in tanning, a rebellion took place. The Kingdom headed by a wise and ageing Queen decided to quit the union and become independent.

Consistent with Brexit the leaders fell one by one and suddenly the Mayflower was re-commissioned to ex-filtrate the leavers from the stayers. May, the UK's PM replacement, and new trailblazer of the old world power, reassembled the conservative platform to reflect a progressive movement towards nationalism. Maypole dancing became popular as people wanted to celebrate and frolic. With the pound no longer being sterling, tee times across the UK became cheaper compared to mid-summer rates in Florida. Golf shoes and gloves together with leather bags would all be on sale and provide stimulus for the resurgence in the UK leather trade. The transition from a common market to a unified community has no doubt reached a tipping point. In retrospect locating the EU headquarters adjacent to a global brewery may not have been a stellar idea and possibly stimulated local leadership to excessive distractions. Besides NATO, the most famous attraction in Brussels is a young boy relieving himself in a fountain, no doubt after a few pints and quite apropos.

So now that the ball is in motion and the world spins to a more selfish and narrow blinkered society, shoemaking and leather manufacturing will not be far behind. Yes, your eyes are not deceiving you; nationalism and border walls will inspire tanneries to be rebuilt as this will trigger an industrial policy of locally grown produce, locally ced meats and seafood (sorry Luxembourg and Switzerland) and locally made leather shoes. We are excited by the expected rush when the jobs get posted to work at the local tannery. Lines will form for beamhouse workers, drum operators and people to run the toggle machines. We know that our politicians will find creative ways to improve the constituents of effluent streams helping

tanners to resolve discharge levels. Traceability will only be utilised by architects, engineers and schoolkids who seek to emulate and design new ideas. The desire by retailers to put animals on welfare will be ignored. Exciting stuff—and a natural domino reaction to the xenophobia that is now sweeping the world. These newly created jobs, rules and methods, the result of making each country great again, will bring prosperity to all and happiness will return to our local environs.

My dream is suddenly disturbed by raucous shouting; an ugly group of

people are engaged in some type of medieval chant that is building in velocity and intensity. My summer siesta is overtaken by a loud incantation and as I attempt to identify the meaning of this repetitive phrase the volume increases and all I hear is Chump, Chump, Chump. With great effort I open my eyes and realise I am watching the closing scene from the US Republican National Convention and the noise is that of angry crowds supporting the nomination of Donald J Trump. Awake, I now realise that my nightmare has just begun. 🌐



QUAKER COLOR
A Step Ahead in Automotive Finishing

A family owned and operated company supplying innovative finishes to the automotive industry for over six decades

www.quakercolor.com

Quaker Color is a division of McAdoo & Allen, with roots in the leather industry for over a century