

Shoe company's export potential begins to show

A Canadian shoe and skate manufacturer has increased its exports from zero to 30 per cent of its annual sales during the last five years.

For more than 50 years, La Compagnie de Chaussures J.-P. Corbeil Ltée of Montreal has been manufacturing shoes and skates for the Canadian market.

The company is divided into three manufacturing divisions: Chaussures Elite, manufacturing men's shoes; Patins Delta du Canada, manufacturing sewn leather, vinyl and nylon ice skates; and Les Patins Orbit du Canada, with a complete line of injection-mould ice and roller skates.

"In 1974, our analysis showed that the Canadian market was stabilizing and that any possible growth would have to be export-based," said the company's vice-president, Claude Limoges. "After consulting with the federal Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, we decided to start our export program with our figure and hockey skate lines." The first markets approached were the United States and Europe.

European sales

The company later set up a European distribution network in Germany, France, Switzerland and Scandinavia.

After successfully penetrating the European and American markets, the

company turned its attention to other potential areas. "Hockey is becoming a very popular sport in Japan. Australia and New Zealand have mountainous regions with cold winters where figure skating is a popular pastime. Our skates are in a price and quality range to interest clients from these areas," said Mr. Limoges.

One market with vast potential is China. "The University of British Columbia's hockey team played exhibition games against Chinese teams in China during the 1978 Christmas break. These games were played before capacity crowds of 15,000 people. From the crowd response and subsequent inquiries, it looks like a very lucrative market," he added.

New type of roller skate

Roller skating, as a new entertainment and fitness technique, is growing in popularity all over North America, Western Europe and Japan. The company started studying the feasibility of producing roller skates in 1977. After a market study, the company designed a new boot and wheels, used new materials, and developed a new suspension system.

The new skate was put both on the domestic and export markets, in the fall of 1979. Sales to date have exceeded expectations.

(From EDC News, March/April 1981.)

Reborn delivery room

Birth rates may be declining everywhere else across Canada, but there is a miniature baby boom flourishing at Victoria General Hospital, reports the *Canadian Press*.

Staffers at the hospital in Victoria, British Columbia attribute the boom to the homey labour-delivery room and its flexible, family-oriented policies.

"Our birth rate is way up," said maternity ward head nurse Fran Martin. "Last year we had more babies born here than at any time in the last 20 years. A lot of that is to do with the labour-delivery room."

The labour-delivery room, the first facility of its kind in British Columbia, opened a year ago. Both St. Paul's and Grace hospitals in Vancouver recently opened similar ones — called birthing rooms.

Bedroom atmosphere

The labour-delivery room looks like a bedroom. Dim lighting gives lustre to the velvet curtains that frame plants on the window sill, an antique dresser stands in one corner, an easy chair in the other. The oak four-poster bed looks like a Canadiana antique.

In fact, the \$8,000 "borning bed" is the *Cadillac* of the maternity ward. At the touch of a button, it performs all sorts of obstetrical gymnastics: the top half can be raised above the bottom half, allowing the mother to sit up and the doctor to perch below during delivery. Traditional stirrups can fold out from the sides.

The labour-delivery room has all the facilities of a conventional delivery room, including equipment needed for complicated births and infant resuscitation.

In recent years, increasing numbers of parents, unhappy with what they view as highly technical obstetrical practice, have opted for home births. The labour-delivery room is the hospital's answer to this trend.

"We took away the surgical mask, cap and gown from everyone but the physician," Martin said, adding this has not caused problems with infection.

Today's hospitals encourage fathers to attend births, but Victoria General takes it a step further.

"In our philosophy we defined 'family' as anyone who is significant to her," she said. "We've had some births with eight or nine people there."



Employees of La Compagnie de Chaussures J.P. Corbeil Limitée inspect and pack skates manufactured in Montreal.