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## Auto boom forecast disputed

### Supplier's top official sees decline

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Not many people care to tangle with General Motors' Chairman Thomas A. Murphy or his economic forecasts. But earlier this week, Thomas F. Russell, chairman of the board of Federal-Mogal Corp., disagreed with Mur-phy's rosy 1979 predictions and fore-saw declining auto sales.

Whereas sales for 1978 are projected at 11.2 million cars, Russell, whose corporation services the auto industry, told a Detroit Economic Club audience that only 10.9 million cars—both obmestic and foreign—would be sold in the coming year.

the coming year.

GM Chief Murphy, who has a proven record of accurate forecasting, several weeks ago went out on a limb saying 11.5 million cars would be sold in 1973. Curysler expects sales of 11.4 million. Ford is the most conservative of the Big Three automakers predicting sales of 11.3 million cars.

"TOM MURPHY last year made a prediction that made eyeryone laugh," Russell told an audience of more than 1,000 gathered at the Detroit Plaza Hotel. "This year he's the one laughing all the way to the bank.



THOMAS F. RUSSELL

"This year he made a prediction more than 600,000 more than mine. I seriously hope he's right,' he said.

DESPITE HIS predictions of a downturn in the auto industry, Russell calls his expectations "moderately bullish."

bullish."
The 2.5 per cent decline in auto sales that Russell predicts is nowhere near the recession low of 1874 when auto demand dropped 22 per cent. In 1975 demand dropped 22 per cent. In 1975 demand dropped another six per cent. Russell said he is counting on the income tax cut, which Pesident Jimmy Carter approved several months ago, to ease the pressure on consumers to put off buying a car.

# County road signs

to undergo face lift

"New and improved" is the catch phrase for the Oakland County Road Commission's latest project. A \$290,200 project to upgrade signs on 1,818 miles of county roads in the urban area recently got the go ahead from the county's cities and villages. "The project includes new railroad crossing signs at 278 'locations, new lane transition signs at 263 location with the objective of replaceing all obsolete and worm out signs on county

roads in the urban area." said John Gnau Jr., rand commission chairman. Seventy per cent of the project is being funded by the federal government with the remainder coming from the road commission's onfers. Cities and villages included in the project areas include: Orchard Lake, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Birmingham, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Bloomfield Hills and Frankin, as well as Beverly Hills and Bingham Farms.

preserve disposable income, making it available for potential car purchases." He also gave American car producers and the tumbling value of the dol-lar abroad credit for "erasing" the inducements for buying foreign rather than Ford.

handenies is of organ foreign rather han Ford.
Russell predicted import car sales would drop a ful is per cent in 1979.
The decline of the foliar on the function of the full rather hand the full result of the full result in producers rown have accepted models which compete with the foreign ones on a head-to-head basis," he said.

WHILE AUTO SALES may be down next year, Russell expressed hope for the 1980s. No longer, he said, will American producers be solely dependent on the domestic market.

"The 'world car' is a concept whose time has come for U.S. manufacturers. It now seems apparent that Detroit products will once again

appear in substantial numbers around the globe," he said.
Russell, however, could not ignore the other voices making more dire the other voices making more dire the other voices making more direction of the president's program could got the president's program could gotte a slowdown in economic globe of the product of t

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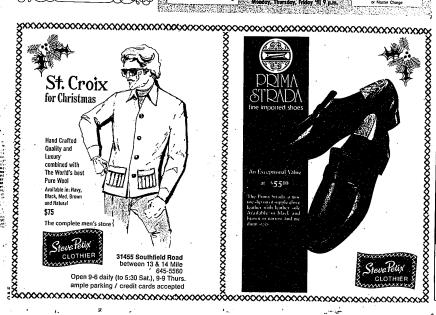
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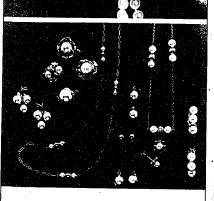
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