

U.S.-made cars in '85 comeback

American auto manufacturers may be making a comeback in their battle against foreign competition in the next six months.

Some 76 percent of all Americans who plan to buy a new car in the next six months say they plan to buy an American-made automobile, according to a survey recently completed by Dun & Bradstreet Corp.

"It appears that some of the foreign car mystique — both psychological and mechanical — may be wearing off. Detroit is benefitting from the increased consumer demand for larger cars," said a Dun & Bradstreet economist.

THE SURVEY also indicated that among Americans currently owning U.S.-built autos, and expecting to purchase a new car in the next six months, 85 percent would purchase another American car.

In contrast, 51 percent of all current foreign car owners plan to switch to American cars for their next purchase.

The D&B survey was more optimistic than reports made to the Economic Club of Detroit last week. Local industrialists see total demand for autos fairly level (10.3 million) next year, but imports increasing their sales by

200,000 and U.S.-made cars dropping 100,000.

"THE SURVEY results suggest that American auto manufacturers may be making some headway against foreign imports," noted Joseph W. Duncan, corporate economist and chief statistician of Dun & Bradstreet Corp.

"By stressing quality, value, performance and technical innovation, U.S. manufacturers have regained ground lost following the oil crisis of 1973.

The poll was begun in April and only recently concluded. It is the largest survey of intentions to buy new cars ever tabulated, D&B said. A nationwide mailing to more than 45 million homes yielded nearly 5.9 million responses, and more than a half-million people indicated that they planned to purchase a

new car within the next six months.

The list of people planning to buy new cars was then cross-matched with one of D&B's data bases listing national automobile registrations.

AMONG THOSE who presently own both U.S. and foreign cars, 63 percent plan to buy a domestic auto in the next six months. Respondents who own both foreign and domestic autos represent 13 percent of the total number expecting to buy a new car within the next six months.

These percentages do not, however, indicate drastic changes in current expected sales of domestic autos. Rather, they indicate a buying trend that may not be fully realized for some time.

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Michigan economic gain meager in '84

The Michigan economy, as measured by the Michigan Business Activity Index, rose a meager one point from its depressed September level of 126 to a new level of 127, according to Manufacturers Bank.

The index now stands 11 percent ahead of its year-ago level.

"This small gain underlines the sustained effects of the automotive worker strike in September and the additional impact of October's Canadian UAW strike," said Manufacturers Bank economist Patrick L. Anderson.

"EMPLOYMENT continued to fall, with over 60,000 fewer workers employed in September and October than in June, July and August. Auto

and truck production and car sales also remained depressed below summer levels.

"We anticipate that the state's economy will return to normal by the end of the year as long as the national economy keeps expanding," Anderson said.

The Michigan Business Activity Index is a seasonally adjusted inflation-corrected composite of 11 different economic measurements covering major sectors of the state's economy. It is based on a 1967 level of 100.

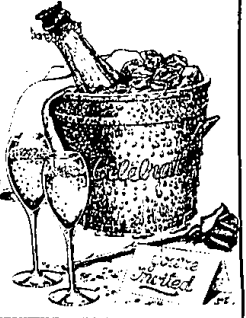
Compiled by the economics department of Manufacturers Bank, it has a 27-year history of accurately reflecting changes in Michigan economic output.

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State horse betting revenue up in '84

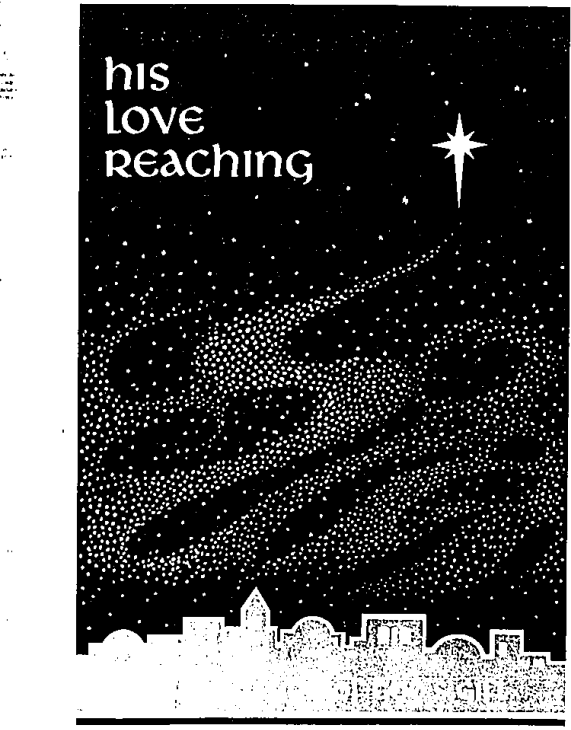
Horse racing in Michigan is turning upward, as measured by state revenue, Racing Commissioner William S. Ballenger announced.

State taxes on racing were up \$400,000 or 2 percent in the fiscal year ended Sept. 30 compared to the prior year, Ballenger reported.

And for the calendar year 1984, it's likely to be up nearly 5 percent over calendar '83 because of the current record-breaking Jackson-at-Northville Downs harness racing meet, he said. It will make the second straight year the harness racing handle has increased after four years of declines.

Ballenger has embarked on a program of treating horse racing as a business that needs state help in promotion. His figures are based on state flat-rate taxes on pari-mutuel tickets sold to bettors at tracks.

Despite the overall improvement, he said, attendance and betting handle have deteriorated at two tracks — Hazel Park Race Track and Detroit Race Course in Livonia. Both are owned by Bernard Hartman and Herbert Tyner, who have been ordered by law to divest themselves of operating control of one of the tracks.



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