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SHORTAGE OF MOTOR MATERIALS MANIFEST

DETROIT, June 2.—Passenger car business in the Detroit district has progressed to a point where the already slender store of parts and materials has been reduced to the vanishing point in a great many instances and in some cases has been entirely wiped out. The big battle of the moment is not to get business, but to get material.

Passenger car makers again have stock chasers on the road in an attempt to speed up deliveries, and many shipments of smaller parts and accessories are being ordered by express.

Car makers in the specialized unit field particularly hard hit, for the shortages are not confined to any one unit. In other cases the body makers have fallen behind, but the serious shortage is with the specialized unit maker.

Basic Metals Are Short

This shortage is most serious because of its origin in the basic metal and the impossibility of getting around the time required for treatment of the metal before it can be made up into the parts. A sudden shortage of malleable has been discovered in more than one plant and malleable stores cannot be replenished overnight.

In the body making field the serious shortage is skilled workers. Newspapers here are carrying advertisements for men specializing in the various processes of body making but the ranks are very low in filling. Some companies feel a shortage of space which will be overcome by the addition of new buildings and in the meanwhile body contracts are being sublet by manufacturers or placed elsewhere than in the crowded shops of the car makers.

The Timken Axle company is installing new equipment in several of its units to meet the onslaught of orders. Deliveries have fallen behind, it is admitted, but with the new equipment the company will get back to an even footing soon.

Motor Output Handicapped

Continental Motors company declares it is fully equipped to meet all delivery requirements but has been compelled to hold up shipments because of nondelivery of other necessary parts to its customers. Shipments are being sent forward in the quantities that the makers of other units or bodies are capable of furnishing so that they may be kept balanced.

Fisher Body corporation has plans fully made to build an addition to its former airplane body plant which has been practically idle since the war, which will give it an additional 1,000,000 feet of body manufacturing space in Detroit. Fisher will not admit being behind on orders and has not one on overtime schedule or double shifts.

The extent of body demand may be gauged somewhat from the fact that one independent body company has gone into production on 17 new types of bodies within 10 days. Some time will be required, the company declares before capacity production can be reached on the new work owing to the suddenness of the demand and the impossibility of getting skilled men quickly.

Inclosed Car More Popular.

Other body companies report themselves as able to keep up to delivery requirements through employment of double shifts and overtime.

Incidental to the body situation, it may be reported that inclosed car demand is running 20 per cent higher than had been anticipated in most of the medium grade cars and consequently deliveries of finished cars are running behind because of failure to authorize release sufficient to meet the demand. Inclosed car commitments must be made at least 90 days in advance, a prominent maker says, to meet deliveries on schedule. Inability to gauge the extent of the spring inclosed car business is responsible to a large extent for the rush in the body plants.

CHANGE IN COLOR OF TAIL LIGHTS IS PLANNED

CHICAGO, June 2.—Automobile engineers are considering the advisability of using yellow in place of red tail lights, so as to minimize the danger of motorists confusing lights placed along highways to indicate dangerous road conditions with automobile tail lights.

Many accidents occur owing to motorists being confused in this way. A case recently occurred in Chicago in which a driver, not familiar with the road, was following another automobile late at night. The first automobile crossed a drawbridge over a river, which swung open immediately after it passed. The red warning light on the light lazy-tong gate that swung across the road as the drawbridge opened closely approximated the position of the tail light of the first automobile, so that the driver of the second automobile thought the red light in front was the tail light of the automobile he was following. The result was that the short section of bridge between the gate and the open draw was all that prevented a serious accident.

The red light on the rear of railroad trains is probably the origin of the red tail light of automobiles. A comparison of the reasons for each will, however, show that the use of the red automobile tail-light is not logical, and, in fact, even dangerous. The railroad train operates on a track and the rear end of that train is dangerous because a train following cannot turn out to avoid the preceding train. As automobiles do not operate on tracks, however, an automobile following another can generally turn out and pass it. It will thus be appreciated that the rear end of an automobile is dangerous only when it is slowing down or standing at the roadside. The use of red lights in automatic or manually operated stop signals for the rear of automobiles is therefore logical.

The members of the passenger car and motor truck standardization committees of the Society of Automotive Engineers, a national engineering society of over 5000 engineers and executives of automobiles and other automotive manufacturers, have studied this proposed change and generally approve of it. The fact, however, that the use of red tail-lights is required by law in many states will mean that the change to yellow tail-lights cannot be made until the laws in these states are revised.

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PORTLAND, June 2.—Details for the operation of the much discussed and long-heralded neutral hiring hall for longshoremen are being worked out today by the board of four which is meeting with the state mediator board in the office of Chairman W. F. Woodward.

As far as shipping board boats are concerned, the waterfront strike is actually over.