

# Home Appliance Market Boosts Steel Business

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By REYNOLDS KNIGHT  
 One of the most closely watched barometers of the nation's economic health—steel consumption—has been given a generous boost in recent months because Americans have stepped up their purchases of home appliances. Sales figures compiled by the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Assn. illustrate the trend. In the first eight months of the year factory shipments of gas ranges were up 11.3 per cent and gas central heating equipment was 6.6 per cent ahead of the 1961 pace.

The impact of these increases on the steel industry, says J. F. Ray, GAMA's president, is indicated by the fact that each gas range requires 225 pounds of steel, each furnace contains 250 pounds and each boiler takes 425 pounds. Steel also is the principal material in water heaters (180 pounds), clothes dryers (200 pounds), refuse incinerators (140 pounds), direct room heating equipment, refrigerators and air conditioning equipment. Such figures can add up to a whopping tonnage.

ACTUALLY the gas industry expects to consume 850,000 tons of steel, 35,000 tons of cast iron and sizable quantities of copper, aluminum and other metals in the manufacture of more than 11,000,000 home appliances this year. In addition, another 2,500,000 tons of steel will be used for pipelines, mains and equipment needed to bring natural gas from the fields to millions of new gas customers. The combined total of steel consumption by the gas industry accounts for five per cent

of the nation's entire steel output, Ray observes. **ATMOSPHERIC fertilization**—Versatile carbon dioxide, the chemical used for carbonating soft drinks, protection against fires, refrigeration and a wide variety of other purposes, is now playing a new role. It is causing flowers and vegetables to grow faster and bigger in a method called "atmospheric fertilization." Increasing the concentration of the chemical vapor in a greenhouse stimulates growth, according to the Cardox division of Chemetron Corporation, Chicago, a major producer of carbon dioxide. Cardox technicians have installed equipment for this new kind of "fertilizer" in more than a score of greenhouses in the Middle West.

**GROWERS** report lettuce maturing in four weeks instead of five, tomatoes with a 30 per cent increase over normal in crop size, carnations flowering two weeks ahead of

schedule, and roses with larger heads, stems and leaves in the Cardox system carbon dioxide stored in a tank on the premises is precisely metered through perforated plastic tubing. The basic equipment costs only about \$80. Cardox predicts the method will soon be in standard use in greenhouses. **THINGS TO COME**—Coming to market is a portable fire alarm needing no electricity and suggested for use in trailers, small buildings without power, or locations where electricity constitutes a hazard: a loud clanging bell gives the alarm. Football fans who dislike those hard bleacher or concrete seats can enjoy the game in comfort thanks to a new inflatable air cushion made of polyethylene and available for a modest 40 cents. Cleaning that paint brush is less of a chore thanks to a fluid cleaner that is odorless, non-flammable, non-poisonous and won't evaporate, says the Pittsburgh-based manufacturer. Opening beer cans may become a lot easier if an aluminum company's invention catches on. You lift a tab on the can lid, swivel the lid piece around a half circle and then peel back the piece, uncovering a neat opening in an underneath lid piece that's an intrinsic part of the can itself. **TEXAS LAGGING?**—California has stolen a march—two, actually—on the other big states among which rivalry for bigness has become almost a tradition. The state's government has announced celebrations for this year-end to mark its ascendancy to leadership over New York in the population column. Perhaps of greater interest to heavy industry observers is the second announcement—California now ranks second only to Michigan in production of motor cars, although it's still a somewhat distant second. The population spurt means, of course, surging demand for food and other essential consumer goods. And a growing auto industry means new jobs for thousands of workers and a healthier market for the West Coast steel industry. **BITS O' BUSINESS**—Rising personal income, which has bolstered the economy in the face of recession tendencies for well over a year, dipped slightly in September to an annual rate of \$443 billion. It was only the third month since the bottom of the 1960-61 recession in which the figure had shown a decline. Are the days of the true pigskin for gridiron sport numbered? Polyvinyl chloride already is used to make the smaller-size football for kids, and now a Minneapolis firm claims it can produce a completely serviceable football from polyethylene. The average American in 1961 bought \$8.24 worth of Japanese-made merchandise, according to a U.S.-Japan trade promotion group; in contrast, the average per capita expenditure for Japanese goods by people in Europe's Common Market was a slim 95 cents. Sales of imported cars in the U.S. slumped to 378,000 last year from a high of 608,000 units in 1959 and will likely be near 300,000 this year.

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