

# Recreation Switch Saved An Industry

A manufacturing switch from baby furniture to pool tables.

That's been the success story of the McFarlane Woodenware plant in Belleville which less than five years ago was considering closing its local operations. The local firm is a subsidiary of McFarlane-Gendron of Toronto.

Today the firm employs approximately 80 persons — mostly men — and production has been shifted completely to the making of recreation room pool tables.

"We were thinking very seriously of pulling out of Belleville," admitted plant manager Jack McFarlane, but with the tremendous de-

mand for pool tables we may now actually have to expand."

Until about six years ago the Belleville firm was making baby furniture almost exclusively (high chairs, cribs, and it then commenced making pool tables on a limited scale.

"We've always made a few pool tables but until about six

years ago production was never more than 300 to 400 a year," said Mr. McFarlane.

"But with today's tremendous demand more than 12,000 tables are turned out annually with a wholesale value of over one million dollars."

And all this has happened within the past five or six years. The former poolhall stigma has gone and women are becoming interested in the game. Pool tables are even turned out in a choice of gold, blue or green felt cloth.

Belleville - built tables are exclusively of the recreation

maple lumber which is purchased locally and then dry kilned at the local plant. They are built with folding legs each with their own levellers. The table bed itself has eight levellers.

The McFarlane Woodenware plant had its local origin during World War II as Bristol Aircraft where moulded plywood sections for the Mosquito bomber were manufactured.

The sections were manufactured in Belleville and then forwarded to Toronto for assembly.

After the war McFarlane

est in pool playing.

"Did the advent of the birth control pills have anything to do with the switch from baby furniture to pool tables," Mr. McFarlane was asked.

"We had a call from New York on that one" laughed Mr. McFarlane. It rated us a line in Time Magazine.

But for whatever the reason, McFarlane Woodenware has found there is more money to be made in pool tables than in baby furniture and buggies.

And the market trend has resulted in Belleville retaining an industry which otherwise would have been lost to Toronto.

## Story And Pictures By Roy Peacock

room type. They are made in six different sizes ranging from 2 by 4 feet up to 4½ by 9 feet. But 80 per cent of the production is the 4 by 8 foot size.

"That's about the largest which can be gotten handily into a recreation room," said Mr. McFarlane.

The tables are sold in a package deal complete with cues and balls. The balls are brought in from England while the cues come from Italy. Tables are completely made here.

Depending on the type of balls purchased, pool, snooker or billiards may be played.

The tables are made from

Woodenware bought the Belleville property and moved its operation here from Quebec.

"Actually there is no advantage for us in Belleville," stated Mr. McFarlane, "rather it is a bit of a disadvantage as most of our big customers are located in Toronto."

Belleville pool tables are sold all across Canada, even in the Far North where the game is gaining popularity among the Eskimos.

In addition to pool tables the Belleville firm makes the ball and cue racks to go with them and also turns out poker tables, and toy boxes.

Mr. McFarlane says his firm does not compete in the manufacture of professional tables such as used in pool rooms.

Increased leisure resulting from shorter working hours and the popularity of recreation rooms in new homes, is given as one of the big reasons for the tremendous inter-

*Intelligencer*  
Nov. 2/66

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