

to the changing market in this way; many other distilleries have been forced to close down parts of their operations. The 158-year-old Gooderham & Worts plant in Toronto is another victim of the changing spirits market. And, the same restructuring that is closing production operations at Corbyville is also closing Hiram Walker's main sales office in Toronto, and regional offices across Canada.

The future of the site at Corbyville has been the subject of much discussion. There are a number of parties interested in the 130 acre property at the present time, but, according to McDermott, it might take two years to decide what will happen to the facilities.

In response to the closing, an "Employee Adjustment Committee" has been established under the direction of Employment and Immigration Canada. The committee has compiled a "skills listing" of the 180 employees affected by the closing and mailed it to a large number of organizations who might have job opportunities. The company has expressed hopes that an increase in job opportunities in Belleville, with the arrival of the Sears catalogue distribution facility, for example, will help ease the blow to Corbyville. Company president Donald C. MacMartin has also promised "generous" severance packages.

### Modern-Day Corby's

The modern-day Corbyville plant was a blending and bottling facility, producing 110 or more different products. 1.2 million cases (12-14 million liters) per year would be loaded onto Corby's trucks in latter days, making Corby's a moderate-sized distillery, with the capacity to double yearly production. Corby's produced a number of low volume, specialty products; Chris Tylecki, Blending Supervisor, feels that it was here that Corby's found its special niche in the market.

Although distilling is one of the world's most ancient skills, modern distilleries combine the new with the old. Corby's has been using the most advanced production management and marketing techniques in its modern operations.

Tylecki explains that computers would be used to determine the formula required to produce a particular spirit. Computer consoles would then turn on the pumps to release a computer-determined amount of each of the ingredients used in the recipe for that particular spirit.

The bottling department also operated with the most up-to-date equipment.

Batches of liquor could be filled, capped, labelled, stamped, packed in cases, sorted by case size by a palletizer that read a photoelectric bar code, and loaded in the trucks—all in the space of a day. Corby's had recently moved the entire bottling operation to a new building that utilized more machines: newer, bigger, faster machines, like automatic packers. The bottling facility boasted line speeds of 280 bottles per minute and could increase this rate on demand.

Long-time employee Brian Kelly remembers when all the work was done by hand. Still working as a machinist in the modern-day bottling operation, Kelly made parts for machinery, did repairs, and conducted a maintenance program for operating equipment.

Quality control has always been of the highest importance at Corby's. Samples were constantly taken for clarity, colour, pH balance, and the correct alcohol content. Corby's organoleptic lab was continually evaluating standard products, working on new formulas and conducting marketing studies.

A potential environmental problem was identified at Corbyville in 1969, as a result of a major expansion in production capacity. Faced with the possibility of pollution of the Moira River by waste from the distilling process, a team at Corby's researched, designed and developed a complete waste treatment system. The installment was built at a cost of \$500,000. The majority of employees shared the company's concern about pollution. In 1970, Corby's anti-pollution program won a national award for such achievement among large companies; the system has long been considered the model for the distilling industry.

Another achievement of Corby's in recent years was the implementation of a participatory style of management about one year ago. Superintendent of Bottling, Rory Wright, explains that the intention was to get all employees involved, and to provide a forum for their ideas and complaints. Employees worked in teams to resolve problems, develop ideas and work on special projects. Wright feels that the program was "very, very successful." He believes this style of management was generating a very positive attitude, which in turn would have a great impact on the company's overall well-being.

It's difficult for local residents to imagine Corbyville without its 132-year-old landmark; for all those years, Corby's was Corbyville. However, Corby's colourful history, combined with its modern day achievements, will ensure that it will not be forgotten. □



### Thurlows holds council salaries

CANNIFTON — Thurlow Township council members will carry on in 1992 without a raise.

The bylaw is eligible for review annually. The move rolls back an increase which had been approved earlier, effectively freezing remuneration for reeve, deputy-reeve and councillors.

During his election campaign, Reeve Gerry Masterson said he favored a pay freeze for township elected officials for the entire three-year term.

The legislated rates for 1992 are \$7,550 for the reeve, \$5,495 for the deputy-reeve and \$4,145 for councillors.

Masterson sees the move as reflecting the tense times the township is facing following the loss of one of Thurlow's major taxpayers — Corby Distilleries.

The township is also putting on hold earlier plans to locate new township offices. Facing overcrowding at the present township hall at Cannifton, Thurlow will use the present meeting hall as overflow work area and council meetings will be moved to the township Recreation Centre.

### Meanwhile, search is on to find new employment

For Corby Distillery employees, who lost their jobs when the company closed last week, it's a chance for new beginnings.

The Corby Employment Resource Centre, which opened last week, steers former company workers in the right direction — into the job market.

One step into the 26 Victoria Ave., office and workers will find the latest job postings and career information at their fingertips.

The \$30,000 pilot project — funded by Corby along with Ontario and federal government assistance — gives distillery employees a helping hand in an otherwise stagnant job market.

Finding employment for about 145 remaining unemployed workers — down from initial figures of 180 — isn't an easy task. But the centre is succeeding.

"We've only been operating since Oct. 1 but a lot of people have come in," said centre worker Diane Piercey. "About 40 people have come by so far — that's quite good."

Piercey's also secretary to the Corby employment adjustment

committee — which originally spearheaded the resource centre.

"Employees are starting to become aware of the centre — that was the whole idea, to have place where employees can come and touch base."

When the company closed its doors after 132 years in the community, people felt a sense of loss, said Piercey.

"There was very much a sense of family among the employees in the plant," she said. "This gives them a place where they can stop in for a game of cards or something."

More importantly to the unemployed workers, however, the resource centre provides computers, along with updated job listings and area newspapers — vital tools for employment hunters.

Corby plant employees finished about two weeks ago. But even before they walked out the door, committee members had done their first bit of job campaigning, Piercey said.

It would be nice, said Piercey, if every worker laid off could be employed by Christmas.



Corby workers leave a message on now-silent machinery.

Photo by Frank O'Connor