

Industry news

Job cuts in manufacturing as costs rise

UK manufacturers are shedding jobs at the rate of 7,000 a month, as weak order books and the sharpest rise in costs for a decade affect profits, according to the latest quarterly Industrial Trends survey from the Confederation of British Industry (Tel: 020 7379 7400).

The survey, of more than 670 firms, found that the slowdown in consumer demand had left the order books of UK firms in their poorest state for almost two years. Output has fallen since the turn of the year — the first decline in a year and a half — and the 21,000 job losses seen in the first quarter are expected to be followed by a further 22,500 in the three months to June. With the price of crude oil more than £10 a barrel higher than at the time of the CBI's January survey, 41% of firms said that they had seen costs rise, while only 9% said they had fallen. The CBI said this showed costs rising at their fastest rate since July 1995.

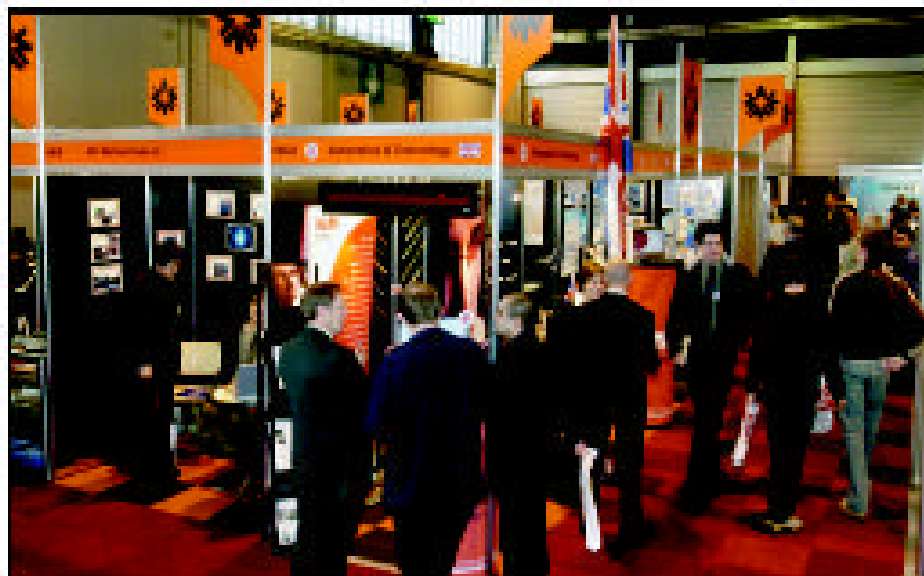
Ian McCallerty, the CBI's chief economic adviser, said: "This latest set-back for manufacturing can be attributed to a number of factors. Probably the most significant is the hike in oil prices, which has helped to push up costs at the fastest rate for nearly 10 years, while also con-

Successful show

The MMMA (Metalforming Machinery Makers' Association) members' pavilion at last month's Midlands Manufacturing Show at the NEC was judged a success by the exhibiting members. It featured

individual members' stands around a central hospitality area, where they were able to hold meetings with their customers.

The exhibitors were ASC (UK) Ltd, Automation & Technology Ltd, Bruderer UK Ltd, Formit Ltd, Indicum (Sales)



JMTBA appointment

Kenichi Nakamura, the president of Nakamura-Tome, has been elected to succeed Tadashi Onishi as chairman of the Japan Machine Tool Builders' Association (JMTBA). This is the first time that this position has been held by the president of a medium-size regionally based company formed after 1945.

Richard Turner, managing director of Turning Technologies UK Ltd — the sole UK distributor for Nakamura-Tome super-high-precision turning centres — said: "We are delighted that Mr Nakamura has been honoured in this way."

Turning Technologies is based in Southam (Tel: 01926 818403).

straining demand for manufactured goods in key overseas markets such as the EU. Exporters could also blame a modest appreciation in sterling for the decline in orders — at the fastest rate in 18 months. However, the decline in domestic orders for consumer goods highlights the more difficult conditions in the home market, too."

Director general Sir Digby Jones said: "It is a very disappointing time for manufacturing. Orders are falling sharply, and costs are rising — both at the same time and both at rates that give us enormous cause for concern." The Industrial Trends survey was carried out between 23 March and 13 April.

Successful Open House

Atkin EDM Machine Tools Ltd recently held a successful Open House at its premises in Coventry (Tel: 024 7667 8888). The West Midlands firm is the UK agent for Sarix of Switzerland, which manufactures micro-erosion machine tools and is a leader in the field of micro-erosion technology.

The four-day Open House, which focused on micro-EDM drilling and 3-D micro-EDM milling, provided an opportunity to see the latest Sarix SX-100 machine performing a working demonstration of both micro-EDM hole drilling and micro-EDM milling.

Also participating in the event was Somatech, the UK agent for Esprit CAD/CAM software; it was running demonstrations of CAM software that has been developed to integrate with the Sarix software.

During the Open House, which was well attended, Atkin EDM received the latest order for a Sarix-100 machine — from the University of Strathclyde.

Ltd, Roemheld (UK) Ltd, Shear-Form Machine Tools Ltd, SMV Presses Ltd, TMA Engineering Ltd and Worcester Presses Ltd. MMMA secretary David Brotherton said: "All the attending members have told me they were pleased with the attendance and the enquiries received.

"This is the first time the MMMA has had a pavilion at a regional engineering show. It has been very successful and is something we will definitely be

looking at for future shows."

Gary Orgles of Automation & Technology Ltd said: "This has been the best engineering show we have done in all the years we have been exhibiting at regional shows. It has been absolutely brilliant."

Clive Meir of Shear-Form Machine Tools Ltd said: "It has been a good show, and the enquiries I have received are serious enquiries — just what I am looking for when I attend exhibitions."

A call for parliamentary reform

The current parliamentary system for examining legislation from the EU is flawed, according to a new Foreign Policy Centre pamphlet from Sir Digby Jones, director general of the Confederation of British Industry (Tel: 020 7379 7400). He said: "Measures that will affect millions of people and cost millions of pounds pass through UK formalities, en route to being implemented into UK law, while barely causing a ripple."

Sir Digby is calling for reforms, which include:

- All politicians taking a greater interest in legislation from Brussels at a much earlier stage;
- Greater transparency, with more hearings of witnesses by scrutiny committees, to allow outside interest groups to voice their views;
- MPs who specialise in specific policy areas to scrutinise all legislation, regardless of whether it originates in Brussels or Westminster.