

# Japan watching

## Steel export figures for 1972

The Japan Iron and Steel Federation has published figures relating to the exports of steel products. For 1972 a total of 21,820,000 metric tons of steel products were exported, a reduction of 9.7% from the previous year. The value of these exports was \$3.753 billion, an increase of 1.6% above the value of the greater quantity shipped in 1971.

The average export price was \$19 per ton higher in 1972 than in 1971. The average price was \$172.

The Federation mentions several reasons for the decline in quantity of exports:

- 1) Strong competition from other steel industries in their own domestic markets and the world exports markets.
- 2) Adverse effects of the revaluation of the yen.
- 3) Severe restrictions imposed on steel imports by some European nations.

Semi-finished steel products suffered the greatest decline, 75.1% down from 1971. Secondary steel products were the only type that experienced an increase in exports, up 6.4% over 1971.

The United States took the highest quantity of any country: 6.210 million tons, a decrease of only 0.8% from 1971. China imported 1.76 million tons, a decrease of 9.7% from 1971. The imports to other individual countries were small in comparison to these two large buyers.

## World record steel output claimed for a single plant

As noted briefly here in February, the Fukuyama Works of Nippon Kokan (NKK) claims to have set a new world record for steel production by a single plant in any month. The December output of crude steel was a record 1,013,000 metric tons, with a pig iron production of 871,000 metric tons. Both these figures are well above the production record formerly claimed by the Yawata Works of Nippon Steel Corporation.

The pig iron output of the Fukuyama #4 blast furnace also set a world record in the month of December with an output of 313,500 metric tons with a daily average of 10,113 tons.

Fukuyama is also proud of the continuous casting rate that totaled 243,000 tons during December, and the total shipments of steel products of 858,000 metric tons.



*Aerial view of the Fukuyama Works of Nippon Kokan (NKK), Japan's number two steelmaker and only integrated steelmaker-fabricator-shipbuilder*

## Japanese demand for steel to reach 100 million tons per year in 1977

Japanese consumption of crude steel for domestic purposes is expected to reach 100,000,000 metric tons per year—one ton per person—in 1977, according to the five-year medium-range forecast just released by Nippon Steel Corporation.

The forecast is based on the projected increases in the gross national product, and includes the assumption that there will be increased consumption rates in the public works and consumer product sectors. NSC appears to have discarded the idea that exports had to be in the 20-to-30% range of steel production.

The forecast does not indicate the mass investments in the steel and chemical industries that were experienced in the past.

The projection for Fiscal 1977 is a production total of 140 to 145 million metric tons: 105 million tons domestic demand and 30 to 35 million metric tons in export.

## Record highs in steel production for 1972

The Japan Iron and Steel Federation has announced the December 1972 production figures for pig iron, crude steel, and steel products.

Pig iron production by blast furnaces totaled 7.023 million metric tons, up 9.1% from the previous month and surpassing the seven million mark for the first time. Production for year totaled 73.68 million metric tons, up 2.0% from the previous year. Actually, fewer blast furnaces, on a monthly average, were needed to produce the new record due to the start-up of several new large furnaces and the re-kindling of several older but enlarged furnaces during the year.

Crude steel production in December swelled to 9.583 million metric tons, up 9.0% from November and passing the nine million ton mark for the first time. For the full year the production totaled 96.92 million metric tons, an increase of 9.4% above the previous year. The past record had been 93.321 million tons produced in 1970.

Crude steel production by types of furnaces was as follows:

Basic oxygen converters: 76.98 million tons, up 8.7%

Electric furnaces: 18.030 million tons, up 15.3%

Open hearth furnaces: 1.910 million tons, down 8.8%

The production of hot rolled, ordinary steel products in December rose to 7.266 million metric tons, up 7.5% from the previous month and topping the seven million mark for the first time. During the twelve-month period production totaled 73.610 million metric tons, up 15.3% from the previous year.

Only in hot rolled special steels did the industry fail to set a new record. December output was 674,000 metric tons, a 0.1% drop from the previous month. The total for the year was 7.173 million metric tons, somewhat less than the 1970 record.

## Pollution problems keep Kobe Steel from kindling new blast furnace

Kobe Steel Ltd. celebrated the completion of construction on its Kakogawa #2 blast furnace on January sixteenth.

Normally the kindling takes place as part of such celebrations. However, in this case the furnace could not be kindled since Kobe and the Kakogawa city government have not been able to reach agreement on environmental pollution control measures. The company is optimistic as there had been an earlier agreement with the city and prefectural governments on basic approval for construction.

The #2 blast furnace has a 3,850 cu m working capacity, and will be the largest of the furnaces operated by Kobe Steel. The furnace would put the Kobe Steel capacity at the ten million tons-per-year level in terms of crude steel, with about six million of this at the Kakogawa Plant. ■