

acknowledged John M. Mohr, deputy general manager of the International Port of Coos Bay and chairman of a port group marketing Ore-

by Atlantic Richfield Co. of Los Angeles. During the past three years, modules have brought to Oregon about 2,000 jobs, with a payroll of

work. An Arco spokesman in Los Angeles, Al Greenstein, manager of media relations, said the reduction in module production had been

gon and Washington. Modules being built in the two states under Arco contracts will be barged to the North Slope oilfields in 1986.

NW truck firm sees no limit in conversions

By BRIAN COUR
of The Oregonian staff

A California pickup truck conversion company, which was persuaded to locate a manufacturing operation in Portland by a Japanese automaker, has met with such success here that its president sees a "limitless" growth potential for the plant.

Custom Fab Manufacturing Inc. of Hemet, Calif., which operates two plants in California and has another contract operation in Oklahoma, opened its Portland plant last October, "and it's already number one in terms of productivity and profit," said William H. Rohrbacher, Custom Fab's founder and president.

Rohrbacher was in Portland on Wednesday to preside over dedication ceremonies at Custom Fab of Oregon Inc.'s plant in the Skyport Industrial Park near Portland International Airport.

The company's main product is a "Custom Cab" pickup conversion, which consists of slicing a Toyota pickup in half and adding a 32-inch, fiberglass rear-seat section behind the truck's cab. Custom Fab also does custom styling packages for two-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive Toyota pickups sold through dealers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

About 80 percent of the plant's production are pre-sold units ordered by Toyota dealers. The remaining production is inventoried by the company, which is managed by Rohrbacher's son, Joseph P. Rohrbacher.

Rohrbacher's said his initial production plans for Portland were conservative. They called for



Joseph P. Rohrbacher shows process that Toyota mini-pickup trucks go through in converting them to five-passenger models.

The Oregonian/MICHAEL LLOYD

the employment of about 15 workers with a projected production capacity of of 30 Custom Cab pickup conversions.

Today, Rohrbacher noted, the plant has 20 workers on the job with plans to expand the work force to as high as 50 by the end of the year. An additional 5,000 square feet recently was added to the Portland plant, boosting it to a total of 18,000 square feet.

"We're building 60 Custom Cab trucks a month at this plant right now; the problem is, we only planned for 30 a month," Rohrbacher said, flashing a big grin. "And even at 60 a month, we can't meet the demand."

The problem with boosting production too rapidly, Rohrbacher said, "is quality. We can't afford to sacrifice the quality for numbers."

Rohrbacher said the decision to locate a satellite manufacturing operation in Portland was

prompted by the demand for Custom Fab's products in the Northwest. The company's Northwest customers, he said, were being served by a plant in Stockton, Calif.

"Toyota came to us and asked us to put a plant here," Rohrbacher explained, noting that Portland is a port of entry for Toyota products destined for 17 Northern U.S. states.

The decision to locate a plant in Portland was eased, Rohrbacher said, by the reception he received from the Portland Chamber of Commerce and the Oregon Economic Development Department.

"I'm very pleased to report that there has never been one negative note from anyone in Oregon," he offered. "It's a clear sign that the bureaucratic process can — and does — work."

Rohrbacher also praised the cooperation his company received from the state Employment

Division. Custom Fab of Oregon, he said, has hired exclusively from Oregon's unemployed labor force.

"Our projections are that we will pump between \$10 million and \$15 million into Oregon's economy in 1986," he said.

Because of its limited production capacity in Portland, the plant produces products only for Toyota. But Custom Fab, which plans to do 5,000 trucks nationwide in 1986, does work for other manufacturers in its California and Oklahoma plants.

"By 1988, our projections are that we will do 10,000 trucks," Rohrbacher said. "And beyond that, the potential is limitless. Toyota sells 350,000 trucks a year, and that's a lot. But Ford and Chevrolet have a lot more dealers and we haven't even begun to market our products to them."