A new Ford econoline rolls off the line at Ford's Lorain plant. Below, steel made at Cleveland's LTV plant is unloaded for shipment to Japan.

Cleveland's industry rebounds

By Fred McGonagle

You can't tell the Ford Motor Co executive from the United Auto Workers officials on stage. They all were UAW caps and white-and-black jackets with "Davy" and "Done" and "Alice" and "Ernie" on them.

You couldn't tell them apart by their speeches, either. They used the same phrases, especially "world-class quality." A thousand autoworkers cheered. A thousand owners of a city where rubbish was piled on the verge. The Nickels stock average fell by more than half.

In particular, Cleveland had the right auto company. White General Motors announced plans to close plants to 27 close plants. Ford was investing $13 billion in Brook Park and its two Lorain County plants. Greater Cleveland as assembled of every seven Ford plants in North America. Suppliers clustered nearby. Ohio had 22 percent of U.S. auto production, compared with 12 percent in 1975. The ships that had brought foreign steel and other 10 years were having more trouble in Cleveland.

The Midwest — the most baltic of the fifties — was moving into the post-industrial growth. For the first time in decades, more people were moving into Ohio than out of it. Though it had lost population, Cleveland metropolitan area remained the 13-largest in the country. Cleveland's eight suburbs had more people than 22 states.

And though few worked in manufacturing, other jobs more than made up for the loss. The area had gained 75,000 jobs in five years. Its per capita income, the best measure of economic health, was increasing faster than the nation's. Yet when the recession had ended in mid-1981, a strange thing was happening. Employers continued to fail companies still downtown and "out west" to compete with Kentucky and Singapore. Or, like 89-year-old Hough Bakery, they closed. The unemployed stood alone highways with signs that said: "Help! We're for food." Poverty rates continued to rise.

Subsidies of $100,000 and $100,000 were stopping in Warren, Steelworker and city officials. Sometimes the city income residents were moving forth and back.

And while the expensive new homes took up old Cleveland homes stood vacant and vandalized until the city War to be over. In June, the two had closed. Cleveland had raised 21,600 homes. The city simply had to put the city to west Lake or Cleveland

Jobs, too, were hitting the freeway to the suburbs, where officials often welcomed them with tax abatements, information about the "transplant." Cleveland itself was selling real estate, too.