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# Play Is Big Business; Toy Firms Report Sales Increase Over 1959

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NEW YORK (UPI) — Play is big business — something like \$1.65 billion a year — and the Christmas season is when it rings the cash registers loudly.

The toy business is up this year. The 450 members of the Toy Manufacturers of the U.S.A., Inc., a trade organization, report shipments for the first nine months of 1960 were running 7.7 percent ahead of the same period in 1959.

At the same time, imports of toys have been cutting into the domestic market. Imports rose by 85 percent from 1955 to 1959.

But, the population increase has broadened the market, and there's no lack of customers.

Along with the population explosion goes the general rise in the standard of living — a very important factor which makes more costly toys more readily acceptable.

**MOT MANY** years back practically the only costly items were in the realm of electric train sets, bicycles and the other locomotion toys.

Today, there are numerous toys in the \$20 to \$30 and higher categories — and they're selling.

Some of the larger dolls carry a \$25 or \$30 price tag. There's a Yukon Dog Sled this year big enough for a child to sit in, and equipped with a harness for dog locomotion. The price is \$29.85.

Emenee is offering the first electric chord organ on the toy market at \$29.95. The American Flyer Stock Car Race, in which two tiny cars race around a metal track under electric power, sells for \$34.95. And the Automat, a series of kits with prement for constructing automation models, retails anywhere from \$44.95 to \$200.

And, for the person who want to spend a little more, Steiff, a German maker of stuffed toys, has a life-size moose at \$750. But, like the other producers of higher price toys, it also offers low-cost items, say a lady bird for 35 cents.

**THE TOY** Manufacturers credit the rise in the standard of living for opening the market for higher priced items.

But, here is an interesting fact. Charles S. Raizen, president of the manufacturers' group, notes that with the rising tide of sales, profits of mem-

ber firms averaged under 2 cents per dollar of sales in 1959. That compares with an average of 4.8 cents per dollar of sales earned by all U.S. manufacturing corporations in 1959.

Another thing toy manufacturers have to contend with is price cutting. They suggest retail prices, but stores out after the business trim the prices—sometimes to even less than the wholesale cost.

For example, one \$12 mechanical toy was going for \$5.55 in a New York store. A \$6 game was selling for under \$4 at another metropolitan department store.

Price shouldn't be the considered factor in buying toys, according to the Toy Guidance Council, an independent organization which has a group of educators pass on the toys and age-grade them for suitability.

**"POOR QUALITY** toys can be wasteful from not only the money standpoint, but also can be dangerous and frustrating to a child," a spokesman pointed out.

"The key to toy buying," he said, "should be age suitability, along with a knowledge of the child. If it's too complicated, or too simple, its no good. It has to stimulate the imagination and challenge the child."

An example of what he meant was the virtual failure of the Space Age toy trend some five or six years ago. The toys of that time were of the space fantasy or Buck Rogers type, the spokesman said, but since Sputnik and the satellites

there's been a resurgence of toys in the space fact category, and the sales are growing.

A vice president of the council noted that he had never seen such a collection of professional-type science toys.

Such is one of the reasons that U.S. toy manufacturers are claiming ability to get an increasing share of the consumer's dollar.