

Fort Collins, Coloradoan 36
Sunday, May 8, 1977

Foreign firms making run at young moped market

A motorized bike that doesn't require shifting and gets 160 miles per gallon would seem to be made-to-order for our energy crunch. But human beings have never been a strong proponent of rationality. And besides, most Americans are so addicted to their automobiles they wouldn't consider using another vehicle, even for local errands.

Nevertheless, Bruno Poratti is determined to make a run at the U.S. market on behalf of the Ciao and Bravo mopeds, two-wheelers related by birth to the Vespa scooter, since the father of them all is Piaggio & Co., a 92-year-old Italian company related by financial blood to the big Italian auto maker, Fiat.

Piaggio, which began life making ship fittings and then branched out into railway carriages, is headquartered in Genoa, where Poratti was born in 1941, the year war broke out between Italy and the United States. Genoa is where Christopher Columbus came from, and two years ago Poratti set out from there because Piaggio decided it was time to have its own man and to own company in America.

previously distributed through an independent distributor rather than a factory-owned outlet.

Scoters have never caught on here the way they have in Europe but Poratti — and Piaggio — obviously expect the story to be different with the moped, which is, as its name implies, a vehicle that can be propelled either by pedaling, like a bicycle, or by the power of a single-cylinder, two-stroke rotary motor.

The lowest-priced Vespa moped is the Ciao. It sells here for \$386. It has a top speed of 30 miles per hour. Its fuel tank holds three-quarters of a gallon of gas, which should be good for 120 miles of driving. (If you run out of gas, you can always revert to pedaling.) The Ciao is strictly a one-passenger vehicle.

A problem with the moped is determining exactly what it is to the satisfaction of state licensing bureaus. If it is classified as a motorcycle, then it needs to be registered. In 34 states the moped is now exempt from such registration. But you still need a regular driver's license to operate it.

Business by Milton Moskowitz

THE MOPED was introduced in Europe 15 years ago — and it has done so well that more than 15 million of them are now in use on European roads. Piaggio and other moped makers will settle for just a slight duplication of those results in the American market, where there are annual sales of 10 million new automobiles, 10 million bicycles and 1 million motorcycles.

U.S. sales of automobiles, bicycles and motorcycles are all down from their peak levels. Is the moped's time at hand? Poratti estimates conservatively that by 1990 some 200,000 mopeds will be sold annually in the U.S. That's about how many Honda automobiles will be sold here this year.

Moped sales last year were approximately 40,000. However, 35 per cent of those sales were in one state, California, where they buy anything on wheels. So it's still a very thin market.

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FORRATI HEADED for South San Francisco, where he organized Vespa of America Corp. to import and market all the Piaggio products. The Vespa motor scooters have been sold in the U.S. since the early 1950s but they were

Census survey set here

How many American households are holding more than one job? How many are working overtime and what is their overtime pay? What are workers' usual hours on their jobs?

Richard C. Burt, director of the Census Bureau's regional office in Denver, said that information in response to these questions will be collected during the week of May 16-21 from a sample of households in this area.

The questions are in addition to the usual ones asked in the monthly survey on employment and unemployment nationwide by the Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Households in this area are part of the sample of 70,000 across the country scientifically selected to represent a cross section of all U.S. households.

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Chatter Box	9:30	Amigo	
Swedish Sat	11:10	Cinema of Blue	8:35
NO. 2			
Marshall Hall	8:15	Late Showings Fri.	
3 Days of the Center	10:30	to Sat. about 11:00	
The Legend of	12:40	CINEMA 35	TEMPORARILY CLOSED

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