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Electro-Motive, library budget cause concern

Part two of three

In this second journey back to the fall of 1967 in Willimantic, there were fears that the Electro-Motive Co. would soon close their operation in the city. The new Willimantic Library was having funding problems, area religious groups united for a Thanksgiving service and the police complained they were the lowest paid in the state.

Electro-Motive Manufacturing Co. announced that they intended to open a new plant in Kingston, Jamaica. Executive vice president and general manager Joseph Flanzer explained that the idea to open an overseas plant was his. He had looked at sites in Mexico, Japan and Formosa, but decided upon Jamaica because it was nearer to the U.S. mainland, and the inhabitants spoke English.

Flanzer stressed that the company was combating rapidly rising labor costs, as they had suffered a 40 percent loss in business during the last year. Flanzer explained that the electronics components industry utilized one of the largest percentages of hand labor in present day manufacturing operations,

and labor costs amounted to 45 per cent of each dollar's sale cost. Twenty major U.S. electronic manufacturers, including RCA, Admiral and Philco, were operating plants in Formosa,

where the hourly pay rate was 12.5 cents per hour. The U.S. minimum wage had just risen by 35 cents. Electro-Motive, as part of the Electronics Industry Association, had unsuccessfully petitioned President Lyndon Johnson to establish import restrictions on component imports. The Kingston plant would employ 100 people and produce capacitors. Flanzer squashed rumors that the Willimantic plant was to close, and that some workers would be transferred to Jamaica. The company intended to send only one maintenance man from their plant at Florence, S.C., to arrange for the installation of equipment. Jamaican laws, while not restricting foreign



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nationals, encouraged preferential treatment in employment for island residents.

A lack of funds controversially closed down the second floor of the new Willimantic public library, where a new children's library and a conference room were planned. John Sinder, chairman of the Library Advisory Committee, told the board of finance that the librarian, Phyllis Belair, had refused their request for the conference room for a meeting because it lacked chairs and tables.

Sinder further explained that funds would become available once the Taylor-Hatheway Children's Library on Prospect Street had been sold. The \$39,095 for library operation costs in the current budget included the sale of Prospect Street premises. Charlie Hill, the head of the finance board, recommended that the Prospect Street library stay open until room could be found in the new library for a children's section. The late Mrs. D. Everett Taylor gave her home at 191

Prospect St. to the city in June 1957 to be used as a children's library, to be known as the Taylor-Hatheway Memorial Library.

More than 700 people attended the second ecumenical service held on Thanksgiving eve in the First Congregational Church. Pastors and choirs of 121 Roman Catholic and Protestant churches participated under the sponsorship of the Willimantic Area Clergymen's Association. The first ever joint service in Willimantic had been held during the previous spring in St. Joseph's. A possible policewalkout was averted when corporation counsel Richard Kelley gave details of a new contract. The working week was 40 hours long, with starting patrolmen receiving \$2.50 per hour, rising to \$3 per hour after six months service. Local police, were currently receiving \$2.38 per hour for a 44 hour working week. Policemen in other Connecticut cities of a similar size, were receiving \$6,616 per year for a 40 hour week.

(Continued next week)