has been postponed rather
than cancelled, the singles
market is picking up. "As
safety requirements are
increased, we may see custom-
ers migrating to twins," he
says, echoing suggestions
from the emergency medical
services thdt continued
growth may be in the form of
more twins.
According to Cliff McKay,
Canada's assistant deputy
minister for regional indus-
trial expansion, the renego-
tiated Bell deal has cost only
time, and that is not such a
precious commodity given the
reason for the change—a
depressed market. Work on
the 206B JetRanger began
last year, and by early 1987
several examples were in
flight test and the first Cana-
dian 206B was taking pride of
place on Bell's stand at the HAI Convention in Dallas. The stretched 206L LongRanger has followed close behind. In August, James Schwalbe was able to report that all 206Ls available in 1987 had been sold, and that only a few 206Bs remained. Production was running at four a month on each line.
Not that start-up has been without its problems. Had the Mirabel plant been used for the proposed Series 400 helicop-ters, assembly and fabrication procedures could have been debugged on the first model as production began from scratch. Following renegotiation of the contract, Bell's introduction of the existing 206 lines has meant that the Mirabel facility "has had to hit the ground running," says Schwalbe. Production had to be trans-ferred without losing a place in the sched-ule. This has been a major preoccupation for the Bell management this year.
The company has been helped by the availability of aviation skills and expertise, since about 50 per cent of Cana-dian aerospace is to be found
in the Montreal area.
Schwalbe tells Flight that he
could not be happier with the
people who have been taken
on. Employment stands at
around 500, and introduction
of the 212 next year will add a
further 50. Bell expects to be
employing 600+ by the end of
1988 to build the 412 and "to
meet other needs". More than
100 employees have been to
Fort Worth for training peri-
ods of from two to 24 months.
After de Havilland Canada
had lost several weeks to a
strike this year (as new owner
Boeing came to terms with
the workforce in Toronto),
Schwalbe reports that "Bell
did not come to Montreal to
keep the unions out". The
company hired a consultant to
educate it in new industrial
relations thinking. Work
teams have been introduced so
that employees may be more

The Bell 412 is expected to be the fourth commercial helicopter to be built at Mirabel

involved. They receive multi-skill train-ing, and monthly meetings provide an opportunity for two-way communication. "We have a long way to go," says Schwalbe. "We hope to develop a sufficiently good relationship between both sides that we won't require third-party intervention. This is the way of the future. We have to do more than give a pay cheque."
Transferring expertise has perhaps been Bell's biggest challenge. Once the renegotiation had been completed and the 206B JetRanger set up, Schwalbe says that three months were necessary to prepare for the 206L. After that he needed six months at least before bringing in the 212, and then as much time again to intro-duce the 412. (The 222 and 214ST are not covered by the Canadian Government deal, so if these are to follow there will have to be a commercial decision from Fort Worth. Schwalbe will be looking for six months' notice.) Bell continues to increase the Canadian content of its pro-

Be^ expects to need at least six months to prepare for 212 production after the 206L

ducts, and has been attending
"reverse trade" shows (where
local industrial services are
offered). It aims to reach 70
per cent.
MBB has been faced with
similar challenges in its much
smaller establishment at Fort
Erie. The West German
manufacturer was allocated

just C$70 million in the origi-
nal C$948 million programme
(but claims to be "Canada's
first helicopter manu-
facturer," because it set up
shop in 1984). Five per cent is
owned by Fleet Aerospace,
which produces the tailboom
and cabin floor for the
BO.105. Canadian content
has begun at about 30 per
cent. Reaching the same 70
per cent target at which Bell is
aiming is a major challenge,
but the introduction of Pratt
& Whitney engines in place of Allison powerplants from the USA will go a long way towards it. The manufacturer will also complete any BO.105s and BK.117s which are sold to Canadians, as well as providing customer support and training. MBB has found many of its initial employees in the Canadian aviation community and, like Bell, it has brought a few managers from "home". Unlike its Texan counterpart, which has settled in a strongly French culture, MBB can iden-tify strongly with the large German-speaking immigrant community in southern Ontario. Ultimately, almost 300 people will be employed by MBB, with many more jobs for suppliers.

MBB's early fortunes in Canada have been done no harm by the Coast Guard's purchase of a dozen BO. 105s, which, with four previous machines, have been bought to replace single-engined Bell 206s. Very soon the company should receive its first Pratt & Whitney engines to get the BO.105LS-5 programme under way. Richard Dixon sees the
defence market becoming
important. The prospect of
a major contribution to
the New Shipborne Aircraft
programme and the mid-
1990s Canadian Forces Light
Observation Helicopter gives
each manufacturer incentive.
Dixon expects to see a signifi-
cant part of NSA fabrication
being done in Canada.
MBB has produced a large
proportion of the twin-
engined helicopters operating
in the USA, while Bell's
JetRanger series is ubiqui-
tous. The West German
manufacturer's plant at Fort
Erie is right across the water
from Buffalo, where ' heli-
copter pioneers Arthur Young
and Larry Bell met more than
40 years ago. It might not take
that long for the home of the
second-largest helicopter fleet
to become the Number Two
western producer. E

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