

nation

# Carter aides hunt for way to relieve inflation 'crisis'

WASHINGTON — President Carter says the nation has reached a "crisis stage" in inflation and energy supplies and his economic advisers are studying new ways to curb the price spiral — short of mandatory controls.

Press secretary Jody Powell Monday told reporters Carter continues to reject mandatory wage-price con-

controls and a tax cut to attack runaway inflation. He stressed Carter is counting on easing the situation by passage of three energy bills "still languishing" in Congress.

Carter has ordered an accelerated review of his administration's economic policies but Powell rejected reports there is some panic among his advisers on which way to go.

"Those reports are inaccurate and unfortunate and pretty irresponsible," he said.

"I'd like to see some reports about panic in the (congressional) conference committee getting legislation out," he said. "It's not a hope. It's very darn real."

Powell said he "does not want to set a deadline on the reviewing process of the anti-inflation program. But he added "it's unlikely any final

decisions will be made this week."

Carter told visiting editors, "domestically the most significant challenge I face is a high inflation rate, which is attributable in a major degree to the fact that after all these years we still do not have a comprehensive energy policy."

"And even after we have reached a crisis stage in energy supplies and inflation, the three major bills that will help to resolve this issue are still languishing in congressional conference committees."

It was the first time Carter has used the expression "crisis" in terms of inflation. It followed a new jump in the consumer price index that has inflation running at an annual rate of 18 percent.

# Farm price supports scant, governors say

WASHINGTON — Three farm state governors — two of them Democrats — voiced disagreement with administration claims that policies adopted after the Russian grain embargo have cushioned the impact on farmers.

They took time off from the governors' winter meeting in Washington to testify jointly Monday before members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, who have introduced various bills going beyond the administration's proposals to isolate embargoed grain from the market.

Another witness before the committee, Sen. James Exon, D-Neb., a former governor, said he had a commitment from Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland to support another change in farm policy.

Bergland will support Exon's bill to set higher price support loans for last year's corn and wheat that is placed into the farmer-owned reserve, the senator said.

Although Exon said the increase is not as much as he would prefer, it would be the largest jump in loan rates in history and it would help alleviate farmers' cash flow problems.

Montana Gov. Thomas Judge said grain prices almost recovered after an embargo but fell again.

Nine days before the embargo, wheat sold for \$3.94 per bushel at the Power, Mont., a typical, centrally located grain terminal, Judge said. Last Wednesday, wheat sold for \$3.59 per bushel, Judge said.

The 35-cent-per-bushel loss represents a \$37 million loss in the value of grain stored on Montana farms, he said.

The three governors, Judge, a Democrat; Arthur Link, Democratic governor of North Dakota and chair-

man of the National Governors' agriculture committee, and Republican Gov. Albert Quie of Minnesota suggested different proposals, but their major thrusts were the same.

They advocated higher price supports, additional food aid to foreign nations, isolation of embargoed grain from the market, production controls to reduce this year's crop and legal provisions for handling future embargoes.

Link said a North Dakota farmers

cooperative is forcing cash-short farmers to pay cash for fuel and fertilizer and denying usual short-term credit.

Farmers are "simply beside themselves," he said.

Quie said, "For the near term, we in Minnesota see depressed crop prices, a cash flow shortage, acute credit needs, depressed sales of farm equipment and other input supplies and increased (crop) storage needs."

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# Supreme Court OKs dangerous work refusals

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court Tuesday unanimously upheld Labor Department regulations prohibiting employers from discriminating against a worker who refuses to perform a task he believes would endanger his life.

The court said the regulations issued by the labor secretary are in line with the intentions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 to provide a hazard-free workplace for employees.

"The regulation clearly conforms to the fundamental objective of the act — to prevent occupational deaths and serious injuries," Justice Potter Stewart wrote for the court.

Labor and health groups said the decision would have important ramifications for the workplace and the strength of OSHA.

The rules were challenged by Whirlpool Corp. after two em-

ployees refused to perform a task at the company's Marion, Ohio, plant, 12 days after a coworker fell to his death from a safety net.

The company docked the workers six hours pay and gave them written reprimands for their action.

A district court found the two men refused to perform their jobs out of "genuine fear of death or serious bodily harm," but it concluded that the labor secretary had exceeded his authority in issuing the regulations.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of

Appeals overturned that decision, ruling the "right to a hazard-free workplace" is implicit in the 1970 law.

Whirlpool appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that OSHA does not expressly give employees a "protected right" to refuse to work and does not give employees "unilateral authority" to walk off the job.

But the court disagreed, saying that under OSHA's "general duty clause," an employer must furnish each of his employees a safe work-

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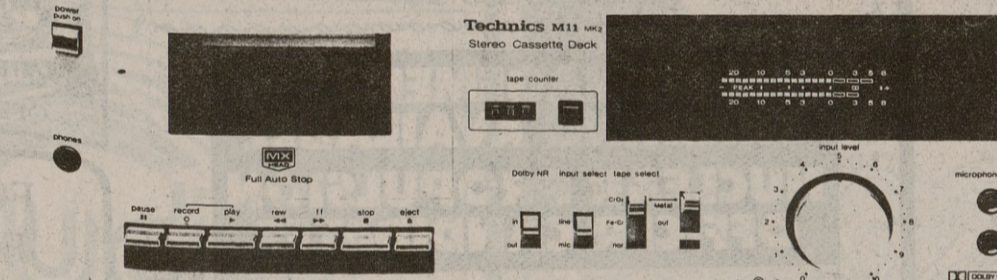
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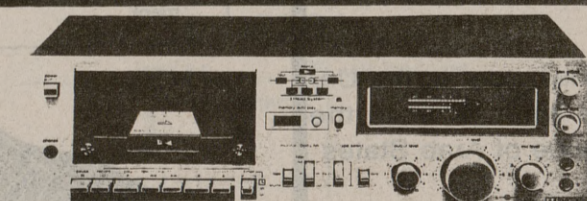
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