

nation

Cost of living increases 1.4 percent in February

WASHINGTON — The cost of living shot up another 1.4 percent in February for a compounded annual inflation rate of 17.7 percent, the Labor Department reported Tuesday.

Grocery prices dropped slightly last month, but the overall Consumer Price Index rose higher on rapidly increasing energy and housing costs. Gasoline pump prices have now risen 68 percent in a year.

The overall February jump in retail prices was identical to January's 1.4 percent and represented more bad news for President Carter in an election year.

Although the current inflation rate is much higher, the administration has predicted inflation of between 11

and 12 percent for all of 1980, compared to 13.3 percent last year. Administration economists say the rate will cool later this year as the Carter anti-inflation program begins to take effect.

The February Consumer Price Index stood at 236.4, meaning goods and services that cost \$100 in 1967 now cost \$236.40.

Home financing costs rose 2.9 percent in February, the Labor Department said, reflecting a 2.2 percent increase in mortgage rates and a 0.4 percent rise in house prices. The increase was the smallest since August 1978.

"Perhaps house prices are going to stabilize because no one can buy them any more," said department analyst Patrick Jackman.

Gasoline prices rose at a monthly rate of 7.3 percent, almost the same as January's 7.4 percent.

Household fuels rose 2.9 percent during the month. Home fuel oil prices rose 5.1 percent, following a 5.3 percent increase in January.

As a result of the recent sharp price increases, the spendable earnings of an average urban blue-collar worker in a family of four — after taxes and adjusting for inflation — declined 1.4 percent in February.

The Labor Department said those earnings are now down 7.3 percent from a year ago, the biggest such slide since it began keeping the earnings figures in 1964.

Although the monthly CPI increase was the same in January and February, the Labor Department said the compounded annual rate — what the '80 figure would be if inflation continues unchanged — was slightly different for the two months.

February's 17.7 percent was down slightly from January's 18 percent. Both were the highest rates of inflation since August 1973, when government food controls were removed and the monthly rate reached 1.8 percent.

The department considers it more accurate to use compound interest rather than simple interest in figuring the annual rate.

The brightest spot in the February picture was the food and beverage category, where for the first time in recent months, prices remained unchanged. Grocery prices declined 0.4 percent, following a 0.2 percent drop in January.

Labor Department analysts warned there will be more bad inflation months ahead, but declined to predict the exact level. Energy and home mortgage rates are expected to continue to rise, they said, and food prices may start increasing again, offsetting possible declines in some other areas.

Automobile financing charges continued to increase sharply — up 1.7 percent — and charges for automobile insurance rose 1.3 percent.

Medical care increased 1.5 percent, faster than in recent months.

Apparel and its upkeep rose 0.6 percent, slightly less than January's 0.9 percent. Prices of jewelry, luggage and sewing materials combined rose 3.8 percent, partly reflecting the increased prices of precious metals that go into jewelry.

Entertainment rose 1.2 percent, following a 1 percent increase in January. Higher prices of sporting goods and equipment contributed to that.

It was the second month in a row that grocery prices have declined slightly. Fresh vegetables, pork, poultry and eggs accounted for much of the decline.

U.S. officials say Cuba is giving leftists guns

WASHINGTON — The administration Tuesday accused Cuba of directly assisting communist groups and leftists guerrillas with men and weapons to help overthrow the ruling centrist junta of violence-plagued El Salvador.

Officials from the State and Defense departments told a House subcommittee there is evidence the Fidel Castro regime is helping infiltrate men and weapons into El Salvador through its northern neighbor, Honduras.

"The Hondurans believe, and our intelligence agrees, that their territory is being used as a conduit for men and weapons into El Salvador by insurgents with Cuban support," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Franklin Kramer.

"Cuban influence on El Salvador and Honduran leftist organizations is long-standing, and there are clear indications that

the Cubans are assisting these groups in their attempt to overthrow the current government of El Salvador."

The same charges were echoed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Bushnell. Both appeared before the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee to request nearly \$9 million in military aid for Honduras and El Salvador.

Bushnell said: "Hondurans are following developments in El Salvador with intense interest, concerned that if that country were to fall into the hands of extremists, Honduras could not help but be affected. Indeed, it is already affected."

"There is evidence that mountainous and sparsely populated areas of Honduran territory are being used for the illegal smuggling with Cuban support of insurgents and weapons into El Salvador." Both officials explained

that part of the \$3.53 million military aid requested for Honduras is to help that country "prevent such activities as subverting a neighboring government."

Bushnell and Kramer noted the ties between Communist leaders in Central America, and the fact that Cuba is most to gain from instability in that region.

"The Cubans have been noted to capitalize on this situation," Bushnell said, "in the year since the overthrow of the government of Central America, and heroes, and fall prey to the kind of chaos and shabby system that Castro described as the Cuban people today."

Doctor says FDA biased against drugs

WASHINGTON — The chief developer of medical uses for the drug DMSO says it is "criminal" for the Food and Drug Administration to deny its benefits to arthritis victims and other sufferers.

"It has the widest range of potential efficacy of any drug," Dr. Stanley Jacob of the University of Oregon Medical School told the House Committee on Aging Monday.

But the FDA, after 16 years of reviewing tests for various uses, has approved it only for the bladder ailment interstitial cystitis, while denying it for arthritis, bruises and an array of other uses Jacob endorses.

Jacob accused the FDA of being "biased."

Dr. J. Richard Crout, director of the FDA's bureau of drugs, said all uses of DMSO except for interstitial cystitis have been turned down because tests were not made with proper controls or were inconclusive.

Crout, who supervises drug approvals, Dr. William J. Gyarfas, who reviews committee recommendations, and Dr. Marion J. Finkel, who makes the final decisions, all testified they have no prejudice against DMSO, an inexpensive by-product of paper manufacturing known chemically as dimethyl sulfoxide.

Jacob at one point interrupted Crout's testimony to say a colleague once overheard Gyarfas say, "I'm going to bury that drug once and for

all." Gyarfas denied making the remark and insisted he has no prejudice against DMSO.

Jacob and three other physicians testified DMSO relieves arthritis pain, speeds recovery from burns and bruises, saves lives in concussion cases, and makes it unnecessary to amputate fingers of scleroderma victims.

The FDA rejected use of DMSO for scleroderma last year after finding it has no effect on the disease, which causes skin ulcers that some-

times make it necessary to amputate fingers of victims.

Quarterback June Jones of the Atlanta Falcons testified DMSO enabled him to control a bad injury already in progress.

"I can honestly say, with drugs I would not be playing football," Jones testified.

Chairman Claude Pepper, Fla., urged Jacob to recruit a team of researchers to make tests.

Proctor indicted in 'diet' killing

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — Jean Harris, headmistress of an exclusive girl's prep school in Virginia, was indicted Tuesday on a second degree murder charge in the slaying of "Scarsdale Diet" author, Dr. Herman Tarnower.

Harris, 57, also was charged with criminal possession of a weapon.

The grand jury action, announced by Westchester District Attorney Carl Vergari, cancelled a subpoena

by his office for a letter Tarnower had written to Tarnower's father, which was found in his possession in Purchase, N.Y.

Vergari said the grand jury did not require defense attorneys to surrender the letter because of a "serious question about the authenticity of the letter."

"They (the grand jury) indicted on second degree murder, which shows intent, and possession of a weapon in the first degree, which also shows intent," Vergari said.

Aurnou has maintained Harris, headmistress of the School in Greenway, Va., to kill her and that the doctor was during a struggle for the

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Drink more milk

LOS ANGELES — Calcium sources other than milk are impractical, says Dr. Roslyn Alfin-Slater, a nutrition researcher at UCLA. Spinach, sardines, kidney beans, broccoli, almonds, fish and cassava are often cited as alternate sources of dietary calcium. "They are not practical sources of this important mineral in the traditional U.S. diet," the researcher wrote in a recent issue of a physicians' newsletter, Nutrition & the MD. This is why the USDA daily food guide recommends two or more glasses of milk or its calcium equivalent from the milk group each day, she adds.

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