

National

Credit up despite bad news

WASHINGTON — Consumers have dusted off their credit cards and resumed their old borrowing habits — another sign the recession is over, although trends on the unemployment and inflation fronts remain grim.

The Federal Reserve Board — the nation's central bank — said Friday that for the second month in a row, consumers borrowed more money than they repaid, indicating the public is slowly regaining confidence in the economy.

Two government reports issued the same day show that despite the economy's slow recovery, inflation and unemployment resumed their upward spiral in October following dips in both categories in September.

The Labor Department said unemployment rose 0.1 percent to 7.6 percent in October and wholesale prices of consumer goods rose 0.8 percent last month.

Neither figure surprised government and private analysts, who noted the jobless rate typically rises at the beginning of a recovery period when more people begin looking for work.

And, as many experts had expected, rising food

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prices and higher price tags on new 1981 model cars boosted overall wholesale prices 0.8 percent in October following a 0.2 percent decline in September.

If producer prices continue to increase at their October rate for 12 months, prices would jump 12.6 percent over the year.

The producer price index now stands at 252.2, meaning those goods that cost \$100 to produce in 1967 now cost \$252.20.

Auto prices — the major factor in the October increase — rose 3.4 percent last month, following a 4.2 percent drop in September.

Prices for consumer foods also moved up 0.5 percent over the month, after edging down 0.2 percent in September. They mainly reflected a large increase in sugar prices.

Lawrence Chimerine, chief economist for Chase Econometrics, a private forecasting firm in Bala-Cynwyd, Pa., said the report indicates "there is still a lot of inflation out there, concentrated in the food sector. That's bad news for consumers because it shoots any discretionary spending."

Although the 7.6 percent unemployment level in October was not much different than in the last two months, it represented a major shift in the employed population.

The unemployment level for adult men dropped to 6.4 percent in October — the first time since April that it has been outside the narrow range of 6.6 percent to 6.7 percent.

Stolen US cars sold in Mexico

Police implicate Mexican officials

WASHINGTON — Mexican government officials are involved in the traffic of stolen U.S. cars smuggled across the border, Texas police officers said during testimony before congressional investigators.

El Paso Police Chief William Rodriguez said his agency had gotten information that Mexican government officials are involved in auto thefts and information that "the son-in-law of the president of Mexico sold a vehicle" reported stolen in Chicago, according to a congressional report released Friday. He gave no further details.

He said both Mexican state and federal police use criminals to steal vehicles in the United States.

Rodriguez, in his June 12 congressional testimony, cited the case of one known narcotics trafficker who is working for them (the federal police) in exchanging narcotics for stolen vehicles.

Luis Barba, with El Paso's Auto Theft Bureau, said the Mexican fed-

eral judicial police probably were most heavily involved and other Mexican police agencies "are reluctant to confiscate vehicles they feel are in possession of those agencies" — presumably meaning the Mexico's federal police.

The two men appeared June 12 before a joint hearing of three subcommittees of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce and Foreign Affairs committees.

Rodriguez cited a number of examples to back his charges, although he did not name names. In one case, he said, an El Paso citizen "recovered his stolen vehicle which was being used by a Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, police officer."

In another, he said, two federal police officers from Mexico City with five vehicles stolen from the El Paso area were arrested by other federal officers. But, he said, the disposition of the case was not revealed.

In yet another case, Rodriguez said "a Mexican Army colonel was given a stolen vehicle for ignoring

illicit activities of auto thieves." He added: "The thieves were involved in exchanging narcotics for stolen vehicles."

Barba said that during the first quarter of 1980, some 264 late-model American-made cars were stolen and transported across the Mexican-American border in the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez area. He estimated 600 to 650 cars from his area were stolen and taken across the border at El Paso.

The report said many of the vehicles stolen in the United States go elsewhere — to Canada, other parts of Latin America and also probably to Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Hearings June 2, 10 and 12 covered the general problem of auto thefts, estimated to cost \$4 billion a year. Congress is expected to consider soon an administration-supported "Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act."

Vapor leak at missile site said false alarm

NORWICH, Kan. — Air Force officials say faulty equipment led them to believe there was a leak of oxidizer vapors from a transport vehicle at a Titan II missile complex.

A spokesman said Friday that minute readings of oxidizer vapors leaking from the vehicle were recorded. But it was later determined that there was a malfunction in the detection equipment.

Lt. Cynthia Scott said missile propellant technicians thoroughly investigated the complex and found no leak.

"The situation at the missile complex is normal," she said.

The malfunction at the missile site, located approximately 30 miles west of Wichita, apparently was discovered about 4:30 p.m.

Kingman County and Kansas Highway Patrol officials were notified about the emergency situation and alerted to be on stand-by.

A McConnell Air Force Base spokesman, Staff Sgt. Thaddeus Hosley, said the oxidizer was not the same material that leaked at Damascus, Ark.

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Warning against aspirin use for children's viral illnesses

ATLANTA — Federal health officials are warning parents to use caution in dispensing aspirin to children suffering viral illnesses because the medication could lead to the sometimes-fatal Reye syndrome.

The national Centers for Disease Control said Friday that at least three studies into a possible link between aspirin and Reye syndrome showed there may be a tie.

"In view of these data, parents should be advised to use caution when administering salicylates (aspirin) to treat children with viral illnesses, particularly chickenpox and influenza-like illnesses," the CDC said.

Reye syndrome, first described in 1963, is a children's disease which kills about one out of five of its victims. At one time the fatality rate was nearly 50 percent.

The cause of Reye syndrome is a medical mystery but the disease seems to follow a viral infection, usually influenza-B or chickenpox. The CDC said it was not known if a virus itself caused the ailment.

The infection attacks the brain and liver. There is no treatment except

supportive care in a hospital.

Dr. Cornelia Davis, an epidemiologist with the CDC viral diseases division, said Reye syndrome was a rare ailment with one case per 100,000 population in persons under age 18. But last year there was a major outbreak of the ailment in the United States, nearly 444 cases that occurred alongside the worst epidemic of influenza-B in 18 years.

"What we're doing is to advise parents to use caution in giving their children aspirin," said Dr. Davis. "We're not saying you should not use aspirin."

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