

# National

Autos up; food, energy down

## October price index rises

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Higher-priced 1982 cars sent the Producer Price Index up at an annual rate of 6.8 percent in October despite a downward trend for food, energy and raw material prices, the government reported Tuesday.

The Labor Department said there was a 0.6 percent increase after seasonal adjustment for October, reflecting a routine boost in auto dealers' prices that hap-

pens at this time every year. "I think the index is overall good news," said Robert Ortner, chief economist for the Commerce Department. He said it was rare for both food and energy prices to drop in the month.

"The index declined 0.2 percent without the motor vehicle increase," Ortner said. This gives hope, he said, that future months, not as heavily influenced by auto prices, will show a decrease.

Consumer foods alone were also down 0.2 percent in their first drop since April with beef, pork and vegetables leading the way down.

Energy products also became cheaper overall pulled down by price breaks for fuel, oil and natural gas, even though gasoline prices ended a five-month downward trend and increased 0.4 percent.

October's 0.6 monthly increase followed a 0.2 percent rise in Sep-

tember and a 0.3 percent increase in August.

The Producer Price Index not only measures wholesale prices for goods ready to be sold, but also for goods being prepared and for raw materials. There was no increase at the intermediate stage and a steep 10.7 percent monthly drop in prices at the raw materials stage.

"The recession usually shows first in raw commodity prices, metals and raw foods, and that has already occurred in August and September and is still occurring now," Economist Jean McIntosh, of the Fidelity Bank of Philadelphia, said.

"When consumers' income is down," McIntosh said, "they buy fewer high cost items."

Consumers economizing on beefsteak, sent the price of cattle, which is considered a raw material, down 4.2 percent for the month alone. Corn prices fell for the third consecutive month.

Another economist said wholesale prices were in a hold pattern.

Donald Ratajczak, who directs a continuing study of prices at Georgia State University, said "the recession has softened up raw materials' prices."

After seeing the government figures for October, Ratajczak said prices show no further evidence of either acceleration or deceleration, except for the temporary auto and truck price movements.

The Producer Price Index for October was set by the Labor Department at 274, showing that the wholesale goods that cost \$100 14 years ago, now cost \$274.

## Weinberger changes B-1 testimony

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, reversing previous testimony, joined with the CIA Tuesday in assuring Congress the B-1 bomber will be able to penetrate Soviet air defenses "well into the 1990s."

And President Reagan told a White House news conference the manned bomber, which faces strong congressional opposition because of its cost and limited penetration ability, will be superior to the B-52 in payload capacity and speed and will present a smaller target on radar.

"I believe this and the MX missile are both important parts of strengthening our weakened triad of strategic weapons," Reagan said.

The B-1 would fill the gap between the B-52 and the new Stealth bomber which is still in the design stage, he said. Even when replaced, he said, the B-1 would be useful to the United States.

Weinberger and CIA Director William Casey defended the retraction capabilities of the B-1B, the advanced version of the bomber, in a joint letter to Sen. Ted Stevens R-Alaska, chairman of the Senate defense appropriations subcommittee.

The subcommittee wrapped up its work Tuesday on the \$201 billion fiscal 1982 defense budget without a vote on the \$4.1 billion appropriation for development of the B-1 and the long-range MX missile. It left the decision to the full Senate Appropriations Committee meeting next Tuesday.

Weinberger testified last week that the B-1 would not be able to penetrate Soviet air defense beyond 1990.

But in their letter, Weinberger and Casey said a mixed force of B-1s armed with cruise missiles and stealth-technology bombers will present an extremely difficult problem to the most sophisticated Soviet air defense system.

"Defense department analyses based on the results of these tests indicate the B-1B would have the capability to penetrate anticipated Soviet air defense well into the 1990s in a multitude of employment modes," the letter said.

With high speed, reduced radar detection and new electronic countermeasures, it said, the B-1 will severely reduce the best anticipated Soviet air defense capabilities.

The B-1, the letter said, will be able to "perform effectively as a cruise missile carrier and as a conventional bomber into the next century."

After a two-hour classified briefing for the subcommittee, Defense Undersecretary Richard DeLauer and Air Force Gen. Kelly Burke disagreed with an estimate by the Congressional Budget Office that the cost of 100 B-1 bombers could be as high as \$39.8 billion.

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