



Class before lunch

Lisa Biry, a junior pre-med major from San Antonio, holds on to her pen while taking a botany quiz on Wednesday. The class was identifying plants in front of the Quad.

staff photo by Eric Mitchell

Economic indicators may hint good news

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The administration Thursday welcomed rare good news about the state of the sagging economy — the first increase since July in the government's sensitive index of leading indicators.

However, analysts inside and outside government advised caution before hailing the onset of better times and warned that bad weather and revisions in the data may wipe out December's increase and pull January into another decline.

The Commerce Department said its index of leading economic indicators, the first sign of changing trends, increased 0.6 percent last month.

"This is welcome news following the steep drop between July and October and suggests that the recession may soon touch bottom," Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige said.

"Taking November and December together, it looks like the leading indicators are leveling off," said Robert Ortner, Commerce Department chief economist and an administration policy spokesman.

In Tuesday's State of the Union address, President Reagan forecast recovery in the latter part of 1982, but administration officials have been less ready to repeat their predictions of an

upturn in the spring. The composite index gave little warning in advance of the current recession, which the National Bureau of Economic Research said began in July.

But once the recession set in, the index chronicled the damage by falling 0.8 percent in August, a sharp 2.1 percent in Sep-

tember, another 1.8 percent in October and — after revision — an additional 0.2 percent in November.

Ortner said the December increase "is a further suggestion that the worst of the declines in the economy have occurred already."

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Laetrile called useless by Mayo researchers

United Press International
BOSTON — The nation's only official study of Laetrile has found the controversial extract of apricot pits, long considered an anti-establishment remedy for cancer, is useless against the disease, it was reported Thursday.

A research team headed by the Mayo Clinic said only one out of 175 incurable patients given Laetrile and placed on the diet commonly prescribed with the drug began to show progress, but even he worsened and died 37 weeks later.

Most of the others died in an average of five months, said Dr. Charles G. Moertel, who headed the 18-month study reported in the New England Journal of Medicine. The surviving 25 are close to death.

The researchers also said some patients in the study had a near-lethal level of cyanide, a component of Laetrile, in their blood.

"We gave it our best shot, but we could find nothing to recommend it to cancer patients," Moertel said.

He said the study was conducted because "a large part of the American public was confused" over conflicting claims on the effectiveness of Laetrile.

Moertel, who is head of Mayo's Comprehensive Cancer Center and oncology department in Rochester, Minn., said the study was the only one done so far by recognized cancer scientists. The study also was the only one authorized by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

Even though it has received no FDA approval, Laetrile has been legalized by 27 of 50 states

and also is legal nationwide under a federal court order, the report noted.

The FDA and National Cancer Institute has said for years the substance was worthless, but finally relented under public pressure and authorized the Mayo study.

The substance, known generically as amygdalin, has been around as a folk medicine for centuries. It was revived as a cancer treatment in 1952 by Ernest Krebs Jr., who patented it under the name Laetrile and devised most of the treatment regimens used today.

The Committee for Freedom of Choice in Cancer Therapy, a pro-Laetrile group based in Los Altos, Calif., estimated 75,000 Americans have used the substance. Major suppliers were based in Mexico and California.

The Mayo researchers were

aided by the University of California at Los Angeles, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City and the University of Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson.

Participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 84, were generally in good condition despite cancer of the lung, pancreas, stomach, kidney or other organs. It had been determined no conventional therapy would cure them or lengthen their life span.

"It must be concluded that amygdalin (Laetrile) in combination with high doses of vitamins, pancreatic enzymes, and a diet of the type commonly employed by 'metabolic therapists' is of no substantive value in the treatment of cancer," the study concluded. "Further investigation or clinical use of such therapy is not justified."

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