

WORLD AND NATION

Economy shows surge in growth

Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — The nation's economy got "a real kick" from consumer spending in the last quarter of 1984 to notch the sharpest annual growth rate in more than three decades and prompt Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige to proclaim "everything is on course."
 President Reagan, told of the report in advance, had been unable to restrain himself Monday night during a tour of inauguration balls and said one of the Commerce Department figures released Tuesday would be the best since 1951.

That turned out to be the 6.8 percent 1984 growth rate, which got a boost at the end from revision of the fourth quarter estimate from 2.8 percent to 3.9 percent. That fourth quarter figure is subject to yet another adjustment next month.

The 1951 growth rate was 8.3 percent. Reagan issued a written statement Tuesday saying he was "delighted" by the report.

"And I believe these results demonstrate, once again, that our economic program, given a chance to work, has worked beautifully in spite of the naysayers," he said.

Most economists were surprised at the intensity of the fourth quarter spurt, coming on the heels of the third quarter's 1.6 percent growth that had hinted at an economic slowdown.

While the focus of the report was on the gross national product, the

government's broadest measure of economic health, Baldrige and private economists viewed that figure in concert with a price index tied to the GNP that showed an inflation rate of 3.7 percent last year.

That is the lowest inflation figure since 1967's 3 percent — another year referred to Monday night by Reagan.

With growth on a steady but not breathtaking pace, and inflation remaining low, Baldrige said interest rates should ease further during the first half of 1985 and keep the recovery moving.

Personal consumer spending was up at an annual rate of 3.9 percent in the final three months of the year, compared with a small 0.7 percent increase turned in during the third quarter. A slump in consumer spending has been blamed in large part for the slowdown last year.

Allen Sinai, of Shearson Lehman-American Express, said, "What is emerging is a pattern of stronger-than-expected real economic growth and less-than-expected inflation, reminiscent of the performance during much of last year."

David Wyss, chief financial economist for Data Resources Inc., of Lexington, Mass., said Tuesday's report was "a major surprise" but not necessarily enough to change his firm's more pessimistic outlook.

He said the administration forecast is "probably optimistic ... particularly with the problem of the dollar having gone up so much."

Schroeder may leave hospital next month

Associated Press
 LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Artificial heart recipient William J. Schroeder apparently suffered some permanent speech damage from a series of strokes but should be able to leave the hospital next month, his surgeon said Tuesday.

"We believe he'll get out of the hospital ... sometime next month," Dr. William C. DeVries said in an interview at Humana Hospital Audubon. "We're shooting for February," he said.

"He's having difficulty with his speech and that's probably been slower in resolution of the stroke than anything else," DeVries said. He said Schroeder's communication skills are still partially impaired, five weeks after the Dec. 13 strokes.

"We don't know how much of that (speech) he's going to recover," DeVries said. "We're looking at a long-term recovery."

"I would suspect that there will be permanent damage as far as his communication skills."

But he said the 52-year-old Jasper, Ind., man is in better physical shape than before the Nov. 25 implant.

Schroeder walks three to four blocks each day without assistance

and has recovered from paralysis, caused by the strokes, on the right side of the body. He was depressed after the setback but his mood also has improved, DeVries said.

Humana Inc., which is financing the artificial heart experiment, has purchased a building near the hospital for Schroeder and family members to live in after his release. Schroeder intends to eventually return to Jasper, DeVries said.

DeVries said Schroeder is well enough to go for a ride outside Humana Hospital Audubon, but recent snow and freezing temperatures have prohibited any trips. A van is being outfitted for Schroeder and the 323-pound power unit that drives his plastic and metal heart.

DeVries said the search for the next artificial implant patient continues, but there were no candidates in the hospital on Tuesday. He said there are about 30 people on a list of possible candidates and that the operation could be performed at any time.

Some patients were eliminated as candidates because they were not sick enough or had other medical problems that prohibited them from receiving the implant, he said.

Funds insufficient payment to victims

Associated Press
 HOUSTON — A \$180 million payment to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange won't be enough to solve all the problems they are reporting, an attorney appointed to oversee distribution of the money said Tuesday.

Attorney Ken Feinberg was in Houston, the first stop in a five-city trip, in which he will collect ideas from veteran groups on how to distribute the money.

Eight industries involved in the production of the herbicide, which was used to thin out Vietnamese jungles, agreed to the settlement. U.S. District Judge Jack B. Weinstein approved the settlement Jan. 7 and appointed Feinberg as special master to oversee distribution of the funds.

Weinstein hopes to approve a distribution plan in April, Feinberg said.

"I don't think it will be enough money to deal with all the problems

the victims are reporting," Feinberg said.

"The real gut problem is that we have a limited amount of money. You just have great need expressed by the class."

Feinberg also was to visit San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Washington.

The attorney proposes setting aside about \$125 million for cash distribution to eligible veterans. That money should be paid out over about 10 years, according to a memo he prepared for the Agent Orange Advisory Board.

Feinberg also said about \$30 million should be reserved for counseling and referral to assist children of veterans who are suffering from birth defects. Another \$30 million should be set aside for financial grants to applicants "who develop proposals to assist the Vietnam veteran community."

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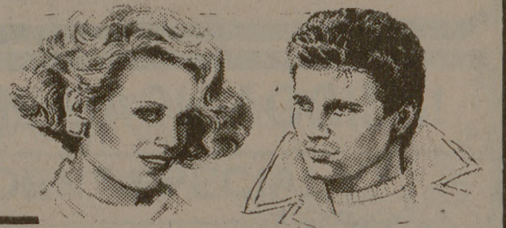
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