

Food prices still climb rapidly

Washington—Wholesale prices rose 0.7 percent in November as the cost of food continued to climb at a rapid rate, the Labor Department said Thursday.

The wholesale price increase was smaller than the 0.8 percent gain in October, but it was still enough to contribute substantially to inflation.

Farm products rose 3 percent in cost for the month after 2.4 percent rise in October and five months of declines before that.

The prices of industrial commodities rose 0.4 percent, compared with a 0.6 percent increase the month before.

associated press datelines

indicating that food prices have been the main cause of the two-month jump in wholesale prices.

Prices paid to wholesalers usually show up later at retail stores and are considered an early warning of inflation trends. Most of the food price increases had not been reflected at supermarkets in the latest consumer price report for October.

Wholesale price increases usually take few months to show up in the Consumer Price Index, which measures the nation's inflation rate. That index went up a moderate 0.3 percent in each of the last three months.

The Labor Department said the price of finished goods, which may be a more accurate indicator than the Wholesale Price Index, rose 0.4 percent, half of the 0.8 percent increase the month before.

Abortions

Washington—Congress is ending its debate over public payments for poor women's abortions, but members

already are predicting that the issue will come up again.

After more than four months of bitter argument, the House and Senate agreed Wednesday on conditions for abortion funding through the Medicaid program, which serves mostly poor people.

The agreement freed a \$60.2 billion appropriation for the government's major social service agencies and guaranteed that the 240,000 employees involved would receive full paychecks before Christmas.

Without an agreement on the measure, their checks would have been cut in half as the agencies ran out of payroll money.

The dispute arose in connection with the funding authorization for the departments of Health, Education and Welfare in the fiscal year 1978. Ten smaller agencies also depended upon the legislation for their budgets.

The compromise calls for abortion payments when a woman might die by going through a full pregnancy, for rape or incest victims who make prompt reports to law enforcement or public health authorities and in cases where two doctors certify that a woman would suffer severe and long-lasting physical health damage because of pregnancy.

Mass graves

Newark, N.J.—An undertaker charged with burying 1,531 infants and stillborn babies in mass graves while under contract to Newark's Division of Public Welfare claims he was simply following a practice common since the turn of the century.

Carmine Berardinelli, 34, was charged Tuesday in an administrative complaint with burying as many as 40 infants in one casket. The burials took place at three northern New Jersey cemeteries over a 6-year period until August 1973, the state charged.

"Not one of the 1,531 individuals entrusted to Berardinelli was buried in a manner befitting the dignity of the deceased," the state said.

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