

Inflation program spurs various views at university

By Shelley Smith

President Carter's recent anti-inflation policy has generated dispute among UNL business and economic professors.

Carter's policy asks American workers to hold requests for wage increases at seven percent and asks business to keep price increases at 5.75 percent in an attempt to bring down the inflation rate.

Some members of the College of Business Administration and Bureau of Business/Research said the policy has two chances of success, "slim and none."

Donald Pursell, director of the bureau, said with inflation rising at an average rate of eight percent a year, it appears that the administration is groping for a policy to attempt to control it.

50-50 chance

However, Jerry Petr, associate professor of economics, and a senior fellow of the Centennial Educational Program said he feels the policy has a 50-50 chance of success.

He said it is a positive approach to combatting inflation and said he feels it is sen-

sible because he is "not in favor of the alternatives of either a recession or an even higher inflation rate."

Pursell said it will be difficult to gauge the impact of the new policy upon Nebraska. All employers, including those in Nebraska, can use the president's policy to hold wage gains to a minimum by urging workers not to request increases higher than seven percent.

Price picking

Pursell noted that many Nebraska firms are modest in size and may have difficulty in determining what prices were during base years of 1976-1977 which would make it difficult to hold price increases to the desired levels in 1978-1979.

However, Petr argued that any competent businessman should know what he's done over the last 12 months and should know how much it cost.

Business Professor James Schmidt noted that Carter's plan has a serious deficiency in that it may not make a sufficient allowance for shifts in demands between industries.

If a particular industry experiences a

large increase in the demand for its product, the price has to rise for efficient allocation of that product. He noted that the increase that may be required may not satisfy Carter's guidelines.

Not so rigid

Petr said he felt the guidelines of the program were not so rigid as to seriously affect allocation.

He said he thinks the government realizes there will be some increase and added this was the advantage of having a voluntary program.

Petr said he likes the wage insurance policy proposed by the president. Workers whose wages do not match the inflation rate would be reimbursed by the government. This proposal must first be approved by Congress, however.

Schmidt said the "wage insurance" could have adverse inflationary effects in that inflation might then feed upon itself through increased consumer spending. The wage-price spiral could then become a permanent fixture of the economy.

Case by case

Schmidt also said he endorses deregula-

tion of industries and restoring competition as a device to combat inflation.

However, Petr said he thought deregulation should be considered "case by case."

He said he thinks deregulation of the airlines is good, because it has "good competitive potential."

But if natural gas is deregulated, prices may skyrocket and provoke inflation.

Petr said he felt the major problem Carter's policy will undergo will be the public's frustration.

He explained that because people are naturally "impatient" and "greedy" the gradual effects of the program will frustrate them.

He said if the program succeeds this year, the president will try for a lower increase next year.

"So you see the effects won't be immediate, and drastic."

He said he is optimistic about the program and is hopeful it will succeed.

"I realize that it may not work. Then I'll be concerned as to where we go next," he said.

Ammonia antidote questioned as effective or harmful

By Kim Wilt

"Poison: contains ammonia. Avoid swallowing, breathing vapors, and prolonged contact with skin or eyes. As an internal antidote, give lemon, orange or grapefruit juice or diluted vinegar. Then give olive oil. Call physician immediately."

That antidote, and others like it, can be found on household ammonia and products containing ammonia, and it was considered the correct one.

consumer byline

Now, however, it has been discovered that the antidote may be as harmful as the poison it is supposed to neutralize.

The Nebraska Poison Control Center, located in Children's Memorial Hospital in Omaha, says the only antidotes it recommends in cases of ingested poison are milk and water.

After consulting with a physician, a worker with the Center said the combination of citric acid in the fruit juices and ammonia would produce heat inside the

body which would do more damage than ammonia alone.

Actions unsure

The Consumer Product Safety Commission, a federal agency located in Washington, D.C., is aware of the problem, according to Alan Ehrlich, commission member, and program manager for the Acute Chemical Hazards Division but they are still unsure of how to act.

The commission is in the process of amending its labeling guide, which consists of interpretations of various laws, and has "the force of law" Ehrlich said.

The problem, according to Ehrlich, who holds a Ph.D. in chemistry, is whether the citric acid is effective enough as a neutralizer to warrant its use.

Ehrlich agrees with the Poison Control Center's recommendation of drinking milk or water, but says the commission still has not decided whether or not to recommend the use of citric acid to neutralize the ammonia even after it has been diluted with milk or water.

Unresolved issue

Although the issue has not been resolved, Ehrlich said he hopes it will be "within the next few months."

Meanwhile, what about those who are unlucky enough to accidentally swallow

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ammonia, or discover that their children have?

"Our recommendation is not to proceed with the (citrus fruit) antidote," Ehrlich said.

However, the antidote is still there, and its being there is not against the law.

Under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, a poisonous substance, while required to show a warning depending on the amount of poison it contains, is not required to show an antidote for the poison.

No legislation

As for having the incorrect antidote listed for a product, an aide to the U.S. House of Representatives Consumer Protection subcommittee said there is no federal legislation covering that occurrence.

When faced with the problem of an incorrect antidote being listed on a hazardous product, such as ammonia, a CPSC spokesman said the manufacturer has two choices. "He could voluntarily recall the product and change the label or he could do nothing and run the risk of possible litigation."

Unions need...

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The report also called for a more active role of the university administration in union management and suggested the Union Board be elevated to an equal status with the union director.

The fundamental source of disagreement between the student group criticizing the union and the union management is a philosophical one where there "are no right and wrong answers," the report said.

The students believe the union should be the "living room of the campus" and the priority of its management should be maintaining comfort.

The union management, however, has maintained that the union should keep up-to-date with other unions by continually renovating and upgrading facilities and fixtures. The report said the union management philosophy borders on commercialization.

The report recommended a student survey be conducted to determine which of the philosophical approaches should be implemented into the management decisions.

Report released

The report has been released to representatives of the union management, the Union Board, ASUN and a task force which was organized by Armstrong earlier this semester to determine how a survey of campus attitudes to the union should be conducted. The report also has gone to the regents. Armstrong said he might present the report to the board at its November meeting.

The auditors recommended that these groups review the report and meet to determine a course of action. After that a plan should be developed to set implementation dates for each proposal. Implementation of the policies should be

closely monitored by the union director, university administration and the Union Board, the report said.

In order to set priorities, the auditors said a survey of user opinion is of "utmost importance."

Armstrong said he probably would meet with Bennett early next week to begin to set up a review process for the report.

All groups will work as quickly as possible but will not be able to move from recommendation to adoption immediately, Armstrong said.

But he warned that all recommendations in the report will not be implemented. "There will be some recommendations that the administration will not approve of."

Identify areas

Mike Gibson, chairperson of the task force which will determine the content and form of the survey to be used said the report would be used by the task force to "help us identify the areas we should be addressing."

Bennett said the union will "continue in a more or less business-as-usual manner" until it is directed differently. He said it will take the management at least a month to fully understand the content of report and begin to respond with appropriate research.

How the audit and the student survey will be paid for has not yet been determined, Armstrong said. Plans earlier this fall had called for both to be funded by a \$30,000 bond reserve account earmarked for long range planning and research for the unions. Armstrong said he has discovered those funds can only be used for planning new construction—not for planning within existing structures. He estimated the audit will cost about \$10,000.

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