

Worker productivity edges up

WASHINGTON — The productivity of American workers barely rose in 1991, the government said Wednesday, as the nation struggled to shake off recession sluggishness and meet competition from Japan and Europe.

Productivity — output per hour of work — grew just 0.2 percent for non-farm workers after falling 0.1 percent in 1990 and 0.9 percent in 1989.



The Labor Department report was released on the heels of Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's remark, which he said had been misunderstood, that Americans had lost their work ethic.

But economists said the lackluster productivity growth had less to do with laziness and more to do with the natural fluctuations during the business cycle, the inability of debt-laden corporations to invest in modern equipment, poor management, demographic trends and the educational decline.

Productivity nearly always slacks off as the economy enters a recession, as it did in July 1990. That's because

sales and factory production fall faster than businesses can trim their payrolls.

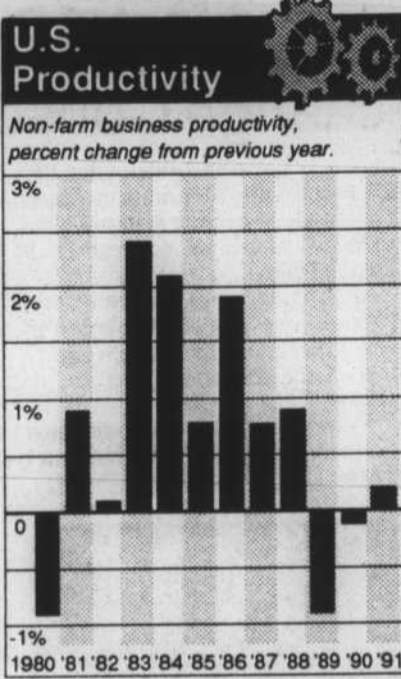
The reverse occurs when recoveries begin. Businesses are reluctant to begin hiring again until they are sure sales and production gains will be sustained. Therefore, productivity rises faster than average.

Examined by quarter, productivity was weakest in the last half of 1990, falling in both the third and fourth quarters. The last nine months of 1991 have seen moderate gains: 1.9 percent in the second quarter, 0.9 percent in the third and 1.1 percent in the fourth.

"The fact that the economy was able to crank out productivity when we were struggling to get out of recession, I find promising," said economist Maury N. Harris of PaineWebber Inc.

Other analysts, however, said that even after discounting the effects of the business cycle, productivity gains were still too slight to sustain robust, non-inflationary economic growth.

"I wouldn't go overboard and say it's getting worse but the fundamental problem we've had for a long time is probably still in place," said economist Lawrence Chimerine, senior



adviser to DRI-McGraw Hill, a forecasting firm in Lexington, Mass. Annual productivity growth averaged 2.4 percent in the 1960s, 1.3 percent in the 1970s and 0.8 percent in the 1980s.

White House unveils health-care program

WASHINGTON — President Bush's long-awaited health-care plan calls for \$100 billion in vouchers and tax breaks to help poor and middle-class Americans buy health insurance, government and congressional sources said Wednesday.

In a package to be unveiled in Cleveland on Thursday, Bush will urge giving poor people vouchers worth up to \$3,750 to purchase coverage, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Middle-class people would be given tax deductions of up to \$3,750 as well.

An administration document obtained by The Associated Press estimates that 95 million Americans would use the vouchers and tax cuts.

The president will propose paying for the benefits by paring back expected growth of the government's rapidly expanding Medicaid and Medicare spending.

About two-thirds of the \$100 billion five-year cost would come from Medicare, which provides

health care for 34 million elderly and handicapped people. The rest would come from limits on Medicaid, which helps 30 million poor Americans get medical care.

The president's plan allows him to begin his re-election campaign with specific proposals to address a problem that polls show increasingly troubles the public. Democratic rivals have advanced several packages of their own.

Chief among voters' concerns are the rapidly growing costs of health care and the fact that the recession has forced many Americans to lose their health insurance along with their jobs.

The nation spent about \$700 billion on health services in 1990, about one dollar in every eight. Some 35 million people are now without health insurance.

"My plan ensures that people can find health care, choose health care, afford health care and keep health care," Bush said in a speech to the Small Business Legislative Council on Wednesday.

Security Council says more sanctions against Iraq possible

UNITED NATIONS — The Security Council escalated its confrontation with Iraq on Wednesday by renewing its commitment to punishing sanctions and issuing informal threats of tougher action.

In a bimonthly review of sanctions imposed on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait, the 15-member council decided to keep in place an 18-month-old worldwide ban on almost all trade with Saddam Hussein's government.



Diplomats hinted that tougher action — possibly including a threat of military force — could be taken if Iraq does not fully cooperate

with U.N. inspections of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons facilities.

"Stand by for further news," U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering told reporters after leading a closed-door council meeting. He declined to elaborate.

The council said in a statement that Iraq also was not moving sufficiently to repatriate Kuwaitis and other foreigners it holds or to return Kuwaiti property as required under the Gulf War cease-fire.

Britain's ambassador, Sir David Hannay, told The Associated Press that Iraq's motives were unclear, adding it appeared Saddam was again testing the will of the international com-

munity. If they are, he said, "they are making a serious mistake."

The British envoy declined to disclose the options available to the council. But a U.N. source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they must include some sort of military threat. One U.N. resolution already contains an implied threat of renewed military action.

The renewal of military force could come from members of the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraq from Kuwait seven months after Baghdad invaded the emirate on Aug. 2, 1990.

The Security Council's resolve appeared to be strengthened by word that Iraq was refusing

to accept U.N. monitoring of its arms-building or purchasing and had called off talks to arrange a sale of Iraqi oil to buy food and medicine and pay war reparations. Iraq refused the terms of the sale as being a violation of its sovereignty.

The council said in a statement that its members "strongly deplore" the cancellation of the oil sale talks, which had been scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

"The government of Iraq, by acting in this way, is foregoing the possibility of meeting the essential needs of its civilian population and therefore bears the full responsibility for their humanitarian problems," the statement said.

Satellite sweep nets violators

NORFOLK — Twelve Madison County residents — including the county attorney and a Nebraska State Patrol trooper — were charged Wednesday in connection with illegal reception of satellite television signals.

Dodge County Attorney Dean Skokan filed the misdemeanor theft of services charges against Madison County Attorney Joseph Smith and state patrol trooper Harold Neilsen.

They are among 18 people and two businesses in Madison, Wayne, and Stanton counties that had search warrants served on their homes last month.

The charges were filed after the state patrol seized altered descrambler devices last month. The twelve face a Feb. 25 arraignment in Madison County Court.

Skokan said he was approached by the patrol to prosecute the case. He was appointed on Jan. 21.

Suicide doctor charged with murder

Kevorkian indicted for helping 2 to die

PONTIAC, Mich. — Dr. Jack Kevorkian was arraigned on two murder charges Wednesday in the deaths of two women who used his suicide machines after saying they could no longer bear their chronic illnesses.

Kevorkian's lawyer predicted the charges would be dismissed. He noted that no change has been made in Michigan law since Kevorkian in 1990

helped an Alzheimer's patient inject herself with a fatal dose of drugs. A first-degree murder charge in that case was dismissed.

"There is no crime of assisting suicide in Michigan," Geoffrey Fieger told Oakland County Circuit Judge Richard Kuhn at a hearing. "Doctor Kevorkian assisted those two ladies. That is not a crime."

The new charges stem from the Oct. 23 deaths of Sherry Miller, 43, of Roseville and Marjorie Wantz, 58, of Sodus. They were found dead in a

cabin north of Detroit, hooked to devices invented by Kevorkian, one of which provided an injection and the other a lethal gas.

Shortly before their deaths, the women made a video in which they described their pain and their wish to die.

Ms. Miller suffered from multiple sclerosis and Ms. Wantz from a chronic pelvic disease. Neither woman's illness was terminal.

A medical examiner ruled their deaths homicide, not suicide.

Drinking

Continued from Page 1

that many students see others drinking heavily and assume it is normal behavior, Hunnicutt said.

"When we look around and compare our drinking with each other, it looks normal," he said. "But heavy drinking is like high-risk sexual activity — it may seem normal, but it isn't healthy."

Hunnicutt said heavy drinking by college students also might cause them to overlook the signs of alcohol-related problems, such as alcohol poisoning.

"If you come home, find your roommate passed out on the floor and see Valium pills scattered over the floor, you'd probably call 911," he said. "But if your roommate is passed out in a pile of beer cans, you might take his clothes off and draw on him."

A rise in alcohol poisoning may be attributed to an increase in "binge drinking," he said, when a student only drinks one night a week, but drinks heavily on that night.

While overall student drinking seems to be declining, binge drinking

has increased dramatically, according to the New York Times.

Joan Day, nurse supervisor at the University Health Center, said that about 10 UNL students were admitted to the health center every month for treatment of alcohol blood poisoning or alcohol-related problems.

"It's often hard to determine how many students come in just because of alcohol poisoning," Day said. "Most students come in with injuries related to the alcohol problem."

Janet Crawford, director of community health at the health center, said that about 46 University of Nebraska-Lincoln students completed evaluations for alcohol- or drug-related problems in the 1990-91 school year.

An evaluation includes having a professional look at the student's drinking patterns, interviewing the student and making recommendations for treatment.

The student health center at Oklahoma State University treats about 10 cases of severe alcohol poisoning each semester, up from six a decade ago, the Times reported.

ASUN senators oppose English proficiency bill

By Kara Morrison
Staff Reporter

ASUN voted Wednesday night to direct the Government Liaison Committee to lobby against the Nebraska Legislature's English proficiency bill.

LB1044 would require all foreign faculty and staff to be proficient in English, and would require all faculty with ranking of assistant professor or above to teach a minimum of six credit hours of classes each semester.

Erin Nelson, a freshman architecture major, told ASUN senators that difficulty in understanding foreign teaching assistants was a concern of some UNL students.

Business Sen. Heidi Putensen said that English proficiency requirements

at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should be explored further, but that LB1044 was not the way to go about it.

James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, agreed.

"We shouldn't get the Legislature involved," Griesen said. "That's not the kind of involvement we need."

Griesen told ASUN that complaints about foreign teaching assistants have "greatly diminished" over the last few years, and that UNL has been tightening its English proficiency policies.

He also said that UNL has a mandatory, three-week program for foreign TAs, in which they undergo tests and cultural adaptation seminars.

If any questions exist about a TA's ability after the seminar, Griesen said, a panel comprised of students and faculty vote on whether the person will be able to teach.



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