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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 3-2420
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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

JANUARY 1953

Consumer Price Index Declines 0.2 Percent
Between December and January as Meat
Prices Drop 1.9 Percent

IMPORTANT

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: January 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measurement of price change :
: from December 1952 to January 1953 is based on the :
: revised index structure, incorporating revised :
: weights, an expanded sample of items and a revised :
: sample of cities, as announced in the Memorandum to :
: Users accompanying the December 1952 report. Infor- :
: mation about the index revision is available upon :
: request. See the General Explanation at the end of :
: this report. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by moderate-income urban families averaged 0.2 percent lower in January than in December according to the revised Consumer Price Index calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Chiefly responsible for the downward movement were generally lower prices for food and apparel, down on the average of 0.6 and 0.5 percent, respectively. The Reading and Recreation and the Personal Care group indexes, here available for the first time, were also slightly lower than a month ago. The Transportation and Medical Care indexes rose slightly over the month, while the Housing index and the index for Other Goods and Services were unchanged.

Prices in most of the large cities priced both in December and January decreased over the month, and price decreases on the average were approximately the same for cities of all sizes.

The index for January 1953 was 113.9, calculated on the base 1947-49=100. This was 0.7 percent higher than a year ago. This index on the base previously used (1935-39=100) was 190.4.

FOOD The U.S. food index, now based on 46 cities, declined to 113.1 (1947-49=100), 1.7 percent below a year ago, but 12.5 percent above June 1950. The decline over the month was due chiefly to lower prices for meat, poultry, and fish in most cities, and especially in large cities. Prices reported for beef and veal, lamb, and poultry, all dropped about 4 percent over the month. Pork prices showed about a 2 percent increase.

Dairy products declined 1.0 percent, with lower prices for milk and butter. The index for the new subgroup, "Other Foods at Home," was 0.8 percent lower, as decreases were reported in the prices of eggs, fats and oils, and sugar and sweets. The Cereals and Bakery Products index showed no change, and the Fruits and Vegetables index rose 0.8 percent, with the largest increases in medium-sized and small cities. Higher prices for fresh vegetables, especially green beans, carrots, and tomatoes, were responsible for the rise in the Fruits and Vegetables index. Apple prices increased in most cities while prices for oranges dropped substantially. Restaurant meal prices showed little change.

Retail food prices further declined about 1.0 percent between January 15 and January 26 according to preliminary estimates, based on 6 cities.

HOUSING The new Housing index was unchanged over the month, at 116.4, 2.2 percent above a year ago. Some subgroups rose from December to January, and others fell. There was an 0.5 percent decrease over the month in prices for housefurnishings, reflecting January white sales and lower sale prices for some major household appliances which occurred in most cities. Residential rents increased 0.3 percent over the month. Rent increases reflected principally the continued effect of decontrol in a number of large cities and a few small cities. Among the large cities, sizeable increases were reported in Portland, Atlanta, Cleveland and Detroit. There were small advances in gas and electricity bills and solid fuels and fuel oil prices. Prices of home maintenance and repair items (priced for the first time) were slightly higher, but other items of home-owner costs were estimated to have remained unchanged over the month.

APPAREL The Apparel index continued to decline and was 0.5 percent lower in January than in December, as substantial seasonal decreases were reported for a number of winter apparel items. Average prices of men's and boys' apparel, women's and girls' apparel and footwear all were lower with almost all cities sharing in the general downward movement.

OTHER GROUPS The Transportation index rose 0.3 percent as scattered increases were reported for new automobiles, auto repairs and automobile insurance. Transit fares were raised in Philadelphia. Prices of Medical Care were 0.1 percent higher than in December, as hospital fees and charges for professional services increased in the cities priced in January. Decreases of 0.1 percent and 0.2 percent were reported for Personal Care and Reading and Recreation, the latter due to lower prices for radios and television sets. Movie admissions were higher in a number of cities.

General Price Situation

No significant new developments were apparent in the general retail price situation. The January decline in the Consumer Price Index was a reflection of normal January influences and parallels recent price changes in primary markets. The all-items index dropped to the lowest level since June 1952 and food to the lowest point since March 1952 while apparel prices are lower than for the last 2 years. In contrast, a number of other groups--particularly the services and rent--continued to edge upward. Except for a few items, such as rents, gasoline, etc., the general decontrol of prices and wages, which was very nearly complete by the end of February, had not occasioned any substantial price advances at retail.

Some decline in retail food prices is usual in January, but the fall in prices of beef and poultry was much greater than usual. The decreases followed substantial reductions in primary markets, especially on beef because of recent heavy marketing of steers, and preliminary reports indicate that further declines will be recorded for February. Pork prices increased at wholesale and retail, reflecting comparatively low supply.

Apparel and housefurnishings sales were prevalent as usual this January despite the general decontrol of prices of most apparel in late November and early December. Since October, the apparel index has declined almost 1 percent and by January was more than 2 percent below last January. Housefurnishings also dropped more than 2 percent over the year in spite of the normal price adjustments which accompanied introduction of some 1953 models of major household appliances.

Most other groups--predominantly services--are still considerably above a year ago, although generally they have risen less than commodities from prewar prices.

: OLD SERIES: The Bureau has resumed compilation of the Old Series :
: index, as directed by the President on January 30. :
: It is expected that the first of the Old Series indexes for 1953 :
: will be available about the first week in April. :

Issued March 26, 1953

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

FEBRUARY 1953

Consumer Price Index Declines 0.4 Percent
Between January and February as Meat
Prices Again Drop Sharply

IMPORTANT

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: February 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and :
: for individual cities. The measurement of price :
: change from January 1953 to February 1953 is based :
: on the revised index structure. Information about :
: the index revision is given in the February 1953 :
: Monthly Labor Review or available upon request. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by families of city wage and clerical workers averaged 0.4 percent lower in February than January 1953, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Chiefly responsible for the decline was a further drop of 1.4 percent in food prices. The group indexes for Reading and Recreation, Transportation, Medical Care, and Other Goods and Services were also slightly lower than a month ago. The Housing and Personal Care group indexes rose slightly, while the index for Apparel was unchanged.

Prices in the larger cities which were priced in both January and February decreased over the month. For the cities priced quarterly, prices on the average decreased from November to February approximately the same percent in cities of all sizes.

The index for February 1953 dropped to 113.4, calculated on the base 1947-49 = 100, the same as for June 1952. This was 0.9 percent higher than a year ago and 11.4 percent above June 1950 (pre-Korea). The revised index converted to the base previously used (1935-39 = 100) was 189.6.

FOOD The U.S. Food index, based on 46 cities, decreased 1.4 percent between January and February with food prices lower, on the average, in all cities surveyed. The February index was 111.5 (1947-49 = 100), the lowest since January 1951. It was 1.0 percent below a year ago, but 10.9 percent above June 1950. All classes of food declined over the month, with the sharpest decrease, 2.9 percent, occurring for meats, poultry and fish. Prices for beef were nearly 10 percent below January 1953 levels. Lamb and poultry prices fell about 3 percent while pork prices continued to rise, showing approximately a 3 percent increase over the month. Price movements for meats, poultry and fish were similar in cities of all sizes.

The decline of 2.2 percent in "Other Foods at Home" was due primarily to price decreases for eggs, which were about 9 percent lower than a month ago. Lower prices for butter and for milk in some cities caused a decline of 0.8 percent in the Dairy Products index. The Fruits and Vegetables index was down 0.7 percent as lower prices for fresh vegetables more than offset increases in fresh fruit prices. The Cereals and Bakery Products index declined slightly and restaurant meal prices showed little change.

The fall in retail food prices showed signs of abating as preliminary estimates based on 6 cities indicated a decline of only 0.2 percent between February 15 and March 2. This estimate does not include "Food Away from Home."

HOUSING The Housing index for February was 116.6, an advance of 0.2 percent over the month and 2.3 percent over a year ago. Small increases were reported for all components except Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil, which was unchanged from January. Residential rents rose 0.3 percent over the month. The Housefurnishings index also advanced 0.3 percent over the month but was unchanged over the quarter. Much of the increase between January and February resulted from the return to regular prices for textile housefurnishings which were included in January "white sales." The small advance, 0.2 percent, in gas and electricity bills reflected a rate increase for gas in Minneapolis and a fuel adjustment for electricity in Cincinnati. The Household Operation subgroup index rose 0.1 percent with higher prices of soaps and detergents.

APPAREL The Apparel index was unchanged between January and February. Decreases reported for women's and girls' apparel particularly in large cities, offset increases for men's and boys' apparel and footwear.

OTHER GROUPS The Transportation index declined 0.2 percent. Used car prices were generally lower but there were increases in a few cities in the cost of new cars and auto insurance. The Reading and Recreation group index was 0.3 percent below last month due to lower prices for sporting goods and television sets. Movies and newspapers were higher in a few cities. Prices for Medical Care and Other Goods and Services were 0.1 percent lower. Prices for Personal Care rose slightly, 0.1 percent.

GENERAL PRICE SITUATION

Retail prices in February and into March were influenced in the main by general economic conditions already apparent in January. The downward trend in primary market commodity prices which has persisted almost steadily since early 1951 is now showing up in lower retail prices. The average level of retail prices, including both goods and services, dropped back to the level of June 1952. Prices of food, apparel, and housefurnishings have reached the levels of 2 years ago or more; prices of most services continued to edge upward to peaks or near peaks.

The removal of wage and price controls was completed by mid-March. Although the ultimate result may not be known for some months, ample supplies of commodities generally have prevented sudden inflationary effects of decontrol.

The decline in foods, due only in part to normal seasonal influences, followed the substantial decreases in December and January, and further decreases were reported after mid-February. All important classes of foods shared in the downward movement. As in January, decreases were especially pronounced for beef, reflecting unusually heavy marketings of steers, which by mid-March had reduced primary market prices of steers to the lowest point since October 1946. Average retail prices of meats, poultry and fish were lower than at any time since November 1950.

Effects of large production were also apparent for other commodities. Prices of milk and potatoes have decreased under the influence of large supplies. Heavy supplies of gasoline led to the rescinding of price rises introduced by wholesale producers in some areas following decontrol.

Nevertheless, there are present in the price situation some factors which may lead to higher prices for some commodities. The approach of Easter has resulted in larger retail sales, particularly for apparel. Decontrol has been followed by price increases for a few commodities for which the demand is strong, notably cigarettes and coffee. The full effect of recently increased costs of some raw materials and increases in wages and other costs has not yet worked through to retail prices.

OLD SERIES: The Bureau has resumed compilation of the Old Series Index, as directed by the President on January 30. It is expected that the January and February Old Series indexes will be available by April 8.

Issued April 22, 1953

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

MARCH 1953

Consumer Price Index Rises 0.2 Percent
Between February and March as Prices for
Most Major Groups Increase Slightly

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index :
: for March 1953 for the average of U.S. cities :
: and for individual cities. The measurement of :
: price change from January 1953 forward is based :
: on the revised index structure. Information :
: about the index revision is given in the Febru- :
: ary 1953 Monthly Labor Review or is available :
: upon request. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by families of urban wage and clerical workers rose 0.2 percent between February and March 1953 according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The only sizeable increase between February and March was a 1.5 percent rise in the Other Goods and Services group index. This includes such items as tobacco, legal services, etc. Other major groups rose fractionally, 0.2 percent or less, with the exception of the Personal Care group which declined 0.1 percent.

The index for March was 113.6 (1947-49 = 100). This was 1.1 percent higher than a year ago. The revised index converted to the base previously used (1935-39 = 100) was 189.9.

FOOD The rise of 0.2 percent in the Food index from February to March represents the first increase in retail food prices, on the average, since last August. The March Food index was 111.7 (1947-49 = 100), 0.9 percent below that of March last year but 11.1 percent above June 1950. The rise over the month was due primarily to a rather sharp increase in prices of eggs which cancelled much of last month's decrease. Food prices averaged higher in 28 of the 46 cities surveyed.

The increase in egg prices, averaging over 6 percent, which was unusual for this time of year, accounted for most of the 1.7 percent rise in the "Other Foods at Home" index. Higher prices were also reported for coffee and shortening. The rise in eggs more than compensated for small declines in the indexes of Meats, Poultry, and Fish (0.3 percent), Dairy Products (0.4 percent), and Fruits and Vegetables (0.3 percent).

Beef and veal prices continued to fall, but at a greatly reduced rate (about 4 percent over the month); prices of pork maintained their upward movement with a rise of nearly 3 percent. Prices of lamb were down generally, while poultry and fish prices showed little change.

Decreases in fresh vegetable prices, particularly in green beans and white potatoes, offset higher prices for fresh fruits, thereby producing a net decline in the Fruits and Vegetables index.

Reductions in milk prices in New York City, Boston, and St. Louis led the decline in the Dairy Products index. Substantial decreases in dairy products also occurred in a number of medium sized and small cities.

The Cereals and Bakery Products index showed a slight increase over the month and prices of restaurant meals were slightly higher in most cities surveyed in March.

Between March 16 and March 30, 1953, preliminary estimates, based on 6 cities, indicated a further slight increase of 0.1 percent in retail prices of food at home. Chiefly responsible for this rise were increases in coffee prices, following the decontrol order of March 12, and a continued advance in egg prices.

HOUSING The Housing index for March was 116.8, 0.2 percent above last month and 2.5 percent above a year ago. Increases were reported for all components except Housefurnishings, which was unchanged from February. The largest rise over the month was for Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil which advanced 0.9 percent. This increase was due primarily to higher prices for fuel oil in Seattle and Portland. Gas and electricity bills averaged 0.4 percent higher than last month. The Household Operation index also advanced 0.4 percent over the month, with higher prices reported in a few cities for domestic service, and laundry and dry cleaning services. Residential rents continued to rise and were 0.2 percent above February with increases generally reported in large and medium-sized cities. Prices of home maintenance and repair items were also slightly higher.

APPAREL The Apparel index advanced fractionally, 0.1 percent, between February and March. This was the first advance for this group since last September. The increase reflected higher prices for women's and girls' apparel in a few cities. Prices for men's and boys' apparel and footwear were slightly lower on the average.

OTHER GROUPS The Other Goods and Services index advanced 1.5 percent between February and March as a result of increased cigarette prices following their decontrol February 25. The Transportation index rose 0.2 percent. Higher gasoline prices reported in a few cities along with increased auto repair costs, were generally responsible for the rise. Used car prices continued to decline in most cities. Prices for Medical Care and Reading and Recreation increased 0.2 percent over the month. Scattered increases were reported for a few items in these groups, such as hospital rates, group hospitalization, movie admissions and newspapers. The Personal Care index declined 0.1 percent. Lower prices were reported for cleansing tissue and toilet soap.

GENERAL PRICE SITUATION

The removal of Government controls had had little effect on retail prices into April. There were sizable increases in the retail prices of cigarettes, coffee, gasoline and fuel oil, but no other important cost of living items were affected at that time. The groups which are predominantly service groups have continued to edge upward but food, apparel, and housefurnishings are generally lower than a year ago.

Offsetting forces recently have caused average retail prices to rise and fall by small amounts. On the one hand, production, incomes and employment, and the volume of installment credit are near peaks; defense spending continues high; government control of prices and wages has been removed.

On the other hand, uncertainties are introduced by recent peace rumors and higher inventories in a number of important fields. An unusually high proportion of car sales is on credit and one major company has reduced new car prices. Used cars are plentiful and prices are lower. According to trade reports, the housing market, particularly for older houses, is somewhat weaker as new building catches up with the long housing shortage. Retailers and manufacturers occasionally are offering inducements to sell major home appliances.

OLD SERIES: The Bureau has resumed compilation of the Old Series index, as directed by the President on January 30. It is expected that the March 1953 Old Series Indexes will be available about the end of April.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

APRIL 1953

Consumer Price Index Rises 0.1 Percent Between
March and April as Prices for Most Major
Groups Show Small Advances

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: April 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measurement of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index re- :
: vision is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by families of urban wage and clerical workers averaged 0.1 percent higher between March and April 1953, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Slight decreases occurred in the indexes for Food and Apparel while other major groups rose 0.3 percent or less, with the exception of the Medical Care group which rose 0.6 percent.

The index for April was 113.7 (1947-49 = 100), 0.7 percent higher than a year ago and 11.7 percent above June 1950. Converted to a 1935-39 = 100 base, the revised index was 190.1.

FOOD The U.S. Food index resumed its decline from the August peak, following the slight increase of last month, with a decrease of 0.2 percent from March to April. The April index was 111.5 (1947-49 = 100), 2.1 percent below a year ago but 10.9 percent above June 1950. Retail food prices, on the average, were lower in the majority of the large cities surveyed, but higher in most of the medium-sized and small cities largely because of differences in the magnitude of price changes for dairy products and fruits and vegetables.

Changes in all food subgroup indexes were fairly small. The largest decrease among the published subgroups was 1.2 percent in the Dairy Products index with fresh milk prices undergoing sizeable reductions in a number of large cities. Butter prices were also generally lower. There was, however, a 1.2 percent rise in the index of "Other Foods at Home," resulting from increases chiefly in the prices of coffee, eggs, and fats and oils. The Meats, Poultry and Fish index, which has declined steadily since last August, continued this trend because of lower beef prices and was 0.6 percent below last month and 10.6 percent below the peak of 119.4 (1947-49 = 100) reached in August 1952. Beef and veal prices declined generally (about 2 percent on the average) and poultry prices were substantially lower in a few cities (about 1 percent on the average for all cities). Prices of pork and lamb were approximately 1 percent higher over the month.

The Fruits and Vegetables index fell 0.4 percent as an average decrease of about 4 percent in fresh vegetable prices more than offset price increases of a little over 2 percent for fresh fruits. Generally, lower prices were reported for lettuce, onions, potatoes, and carrots.

Bread prices rose in Chicago and Washington, D. C., accounting for much of the rise of 0.3 percent in the Cereals and Bakery Products index. Restaurant meal prices averaged slightly lower in April.

Retail food prices showed a 0.9 percent increase between April 13 and April 27, 1953, according to preliminary estimates based on 6 cities. Restaurant meals are not included in these estimates.

HOUSING The Housing index for April was 117.0, up 0.2 percent above last month. An increase of 0.3 percent over the month was reported for residential rents and other shelter expenses. The Household Operation index also advanced 0.3 percent as increases were reported in a few cities for dry cleaning, laundry, and domestic services. The largest decline from March was for Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil which dropped 0.6 percent. The Housefurnishings index for April was 0.2 percent below March with lower prices reported for washing machines, electric refrigerators and toilet tissue.

APPAREL The Apparel index declined slightly (0.1 percent) over the month. Decreases reported for women's and girls' apparel, especially in the large cities, accounted for most of the group decline. Seasonal clearance prices for women's wool suits and lightweight coats and lower prices for rayon suits and nylon hose were largely responsible for the decline in women's and girls' apparel. Prices for men's and boys' apparel were unchanged, on the average, while the cost of footwear advanced slightly.

OTHER GROUPS The Medical Care index rose 0.6 percent, primarily as the result of increases for group hospitalization rates in a few cities. The Other Goods and Services index advanced 0.3 percent over the month as higher prices were again reported for cigarettes. Transportation and Personal Care costs increased 0.1 percent. Increases were reported for a few items in these groups such as auto repairs, gasoline, and beauty shop services. The Reading and Recreation Group index rose 0.2 percent, reflecting scattered increases for movie admissions and television repairs.

OLD SERIES: The Bureau has resumed compilation of the Old Series Index, as directed by the President on January 30. It is expected that the April 1953 Old Series indexes will be available about the end of May.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 3-2420
Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

MAY 1953

Consumer Price Index Rises 0.3 Percent Between
April and May as Prices for Nearly All
Major Groups Increase

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: May 1953 for the average of U. S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measurement of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index re- :
: vision is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :
:

Retail prices of goods and services purchased by families of urban wage and clerical workers averaged 0.3 percent higher in May than in April 1953, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. All major groups advanced slightly with the exception of the Transportation group which showed no change. The largest increases between April and May were in the Food and the Medical Care indexes which rose 0.5 and 0.4 percent, respectively.

The composite index for May was 114.0 (1947-49 = 100). This was 0.9 percent higher than May 1952 and 12.0 percent above June 1950. Converted to a 1935-39 = 100 base, the revised index was 190.6.

FOOD The U.S. Food index increased 0.5 percent from April to May as average retail food prices rose in 37 of the 46 cities surveyed. The index for May was 112.1 (1947-49 = 100), 1.9 percent below the May index of last year, but 11.5 percent above the June 1950 level. A rise of about 7 percent in pork prices dominated the food price increases during the month.

The increase in pork prices offset the continuing decline in the prices of beef and veal (down about 1 percent), and chiefly accounted for the rise of 2.2 percent in the Meats, Poultry and Fish index. This is the first increase for this subgroup since last August. Lamb prices were up about 4½ percent, on the average, due primarily to sharp increases in a few cities. Poultry prices were down slightly, while prices for fish showed no change.

The Dairy Products index continued its decline with a 1.1 percent decrease over the month as milk prices fell in several large cities as well as in a number of medium sized and small cities.

Changes in other food subgroup indexes were relatively minor. The Cereals and Bakery Products index rose 0.3 percent with price increases recorded for vanilla cookies, soda crackers, and rice. The Fruits and Vegetables index was up 0.2 percent reflecting the effects of increases in fresh fruit prices, although prices of fresh vegetables declined. The index of "Other Foods at Home" declined 0.1 percent as higher prices were reported for fats and oils, while coffee prices turned down following the increase of the previous month. Restaurant meal prices rose slightly.

Preliminary estimates, based on 8 cities, show an increase of 0.3 percent in retail prices of food between May 15 and May 25. These estimates do not include restaurant meal prices.

HOUSING The Housing index for May was 117.1, an increase of 0.1 percent above April. The largest rise over the month was for Residential Rents which advanced 0.7 percent. The Household Operation index was up 0.3 percent between April and May with increases in a few cities for dry cleaning and laundry services. Gas and electricity bills averaged 0.1 percent higher than last month. A decrease of 1.5 percent occurred for Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil as seasonally lower prices were reported in a number of cities for coal and fuel oil. The Housefurnishings index was 0.2 percent below last month reflecting in part lower prices for household textiles.

APPAREL The Apparel index advanced slightly (0.1 percent) over the month. Prices were higher, on the average, in most cities for footwear and men's and boys' apparel. Women's and girls' apparel showed little change.

OTHER GROUPS The Medical Care index rose 0.4 percent due to increases in some cities for group hospitalization, medical and dental fees, and hospital rates. Personal Care costs advanced 0.3 percent over the month with higher prices reported for beauty shop services. Prices for Reading and Recreation and Other Goods and Services increased 0.1 percent. The Transportation index remained unchanged from April. Increases reported for auto repairs, gasoline, and railroad fares in the Interstate Commerce Commission Western District were offset by generally lower prices for used cars.

GENERAL PRICE SITUATION

There has been no pronounced general trend in prices in recent months. The period has been one of adjustment in particular industries, with upward or downward movements, beginning in primary markets. On the average, the over-all price indexes are little changed from a few months ago, either at wholesale or retail.

Despite the generally high level of incomes and of economic activity, consumer resistance to higher prices has been reported in a number of fields. Trade reports indicate some slowdown in the sale of houses; dealers have also been reporting sales resistance for some important consumer durables. Some outright price reductions or concessions have recently been observed in these fields.

On the whole, several cost increases -- such as in the steel and petroleum industries -- have occurred too recently to judge the effects on prices of finished consumer goods. However, some manufacturers, such as the major automobile producers, have already announced that they are planning to absorb these higher costs. Earlier cost increases in primary markets and wage rate advances, following the end of price and wage controls, are gradually showing up in the retail prices of a number of services and commodities.

OLD SERIES: The Bureau has resumed compilation of the Old Series Index, as directed by the President on January 30. It is expected that the May 1953 Old Series indexes will be available about the end of June.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

JUNE 1953

Consumer Price Index Advances 0.4 Percent
Between May and June as Food Prices
Rise 1.4 Percent

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: June 1953 for the average of U. S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measurement of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index revi- :
: sion is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :
:

Retail prices of goods and services bought by urban families of wage earners and clerical workers rose 0.4 percent between May and June 1953, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Chiefly responsible for the increase was a rise of 1.4 percent in retail food prices. In addition, Housing, Medical Care and Other Goods and Services increased fractionally; Apparel, Personal Care, and Reading and Recreation showed slight declines; and Transportation was unchanged on the average during the month.

The U.S. All Items index for June was 114.5 (1947-49 = 100), 0.2 percent above the previous high level of August and November 1952, 1.0 percent higher than June 1952, and 12.5 percent above the level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the revised index for June was 191.4.

FOOD The increase of 1.4 percent in the Food index from May to June canceled most of the decline that took place earlier this year and returned the index nearly to the level of last December. The June index was 113.7 (1947-49 = 100), still 0.8 percent below a year ago, but 13.1 percent higher than in June 1950. Retail food prices rose, on the average, in all but 2 of the 46 cities surveyed. Increases of 2 percent or more were reported in 7 of the 20 large cities. Except for dairy products, all food subgroup indexes advanced; the sharpest rise (5.6 percent) occurred in the Fruits and Vegetables index.

Prices of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables averaged about 8 percent and 10 percent higher, respectively, than a month ago, reflecting general advances for apples, oranges, celery, cabbage, tomatoes, green beans, and carrots. Potato prices averaged slightly lower than a month ago.

The Meats, Poultry, and Fish index rose 1.9 percent as pork prices climbed about 6 percent on the average, during the month. Beef and veal prices rose slightly for the first time since last September. Average prices of lamb were up about 4 percent, while poultry prices were down about 2½ percent. Fish prices showed a slight average decline.

The rise of 0.4 percent in the Cereals and Bakery Products index resulted chiefly from increases in prices of bread and other bakery products in several cities. Generally higher egg prices largely accounted for the rise of 0.5 percent in the index of

"Other Foods at Home." Coffee prices were lower. The Dairy Products index declined 0.3 percent as milk prices decreased in a few cities. Restaurant meal prices were unchanged, on the average.

Between June 15 and June 29 retail food prices in 8 cities showed little change on the average, according to preliminary estimates. The increases in prices of fresh fruits, pork, and eggs, were largely offset by decreases in fresh vegetables, poultry, and meats other than pork. Restaurant meal prices are not included in these estimates.

HOUSING The Housing composite index rose 0.3 percent between May and June, led by an advance of 0.6 percent for Household Operation, reflecting higher rates for telephone service. Dry cleaning and laundry services also increased. A number of items of home repair also were higher. Housefurnishings increased 0.4 percent as merchandise reduced for May sales was returned to regular price lines. A substantial rise in residential rents in Cincinnati, following decontrol in May, was a significant factor in the increase of 0.2 percent in the Rent index between May and June. The Gas and Electricity index declined 0.2 percent with lower cost of electricity for consumers in Portland, Oregon, more than offsetting higher gas rates in St. Louis. Prices of Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil were unchanged on the average during the month.

APPAREL The Apparel index continued at about the level reached 6 months ago, declining fractionally (0.1 percent) between May and June. Prices of Apparel for all family members averaged slightly lower, except for footwear prices, which showed a slight rise.

OTHER GROUPS The Medical Care index increased 0.3 percent during the month as higher prices were reported for drugs and dental services. Other Goods and Services rose 0.2 percent, reflecting higher prices for cigarettes and beer in several cities. The Personal Care index declined 0.2 percent. Prices were lower for toilet soap while costs of beauty shop services increased. Admission charges for motion pictures were higher. There were price reductions for toys, radios and television sets and the index for Reading and Recreation decreased 0.2 percent. The Transportation index remained at the level of a month ago, as prices for used cars moved downward offsetting increases for automobile repairs and gasoline.

OLD SERIES: Calculation of the Old Series Index, which was resumed for a period of 6 months by direction of the President, will be discontinued after issuance of the indexes for June 1953. It is expected that the final release will be available about the end of July.

Issued August 26, 1953

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 3-2420
Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

JULY 1953

**Consumer Price Index Rises 0.2 Percent
Between June and July 1953**

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: July 1953 for the average of U. S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measurement of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index revi- :
: sion is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by urban families of wage earners and clerical workers rose 0.2 percent between June and July 1953, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is the fifth month in which the index has advanced, for a total increase of 1.1 percent since February 1953. From mid-June to mid-July increases occurred in Housing and Medical Care (0.3 percent), Transportation (0.2 percent), and Food and Other Goods and Services (0.1 percent). Declines were reported in Reading and Recreation (0.4 percent) and Apparel prices (0.2 percent).

The U.S. All Items index for July 1953 was 114.7 (1947-49 = 100), 0.5 percent higher than a year ago, and 12.7 percent above the level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the July index was 191.8.

FOOD The U.S. Food index advanced 0.1 percent from June to July as retail food prices averaged higher in 27 of the 46 cities surveyed. The index for July was 113.8 (1947-49 = 100), 2.1 percent below July 1952 but 13.2 percent above the June 1950 level. Sharp declines in prices of fresh vegetables offset in large part the price increases for other foods, particularly eggs, pork, poultry and fresh milk.

The drop in fresh vegetable prices as local crops became available averaged about 9 percent and was the principal cause for the 2.9 percent decline in the Fruits and Vegetables index. The most notable reductions occurred in prices of green beans, cabbage, celery, and tomatoes. Fresh fruit prices decreased slightly on the average, but price trends varied considerably in various cities.

An advance of about 4 percent in egg prices, now in the period of seasonal rise, was the major element in the rise of 1.3 percent in the index of "Other Foods at Home." Coffee prices edged upward in most large cities.

Prices of Meats, Poultry, and Fish rose 0.6 percent. Poultry prices averaged about 3 percent higher nationally, but were lower in the larger Pacific Coast cities. Prices of pork continued to climb, moving up about 2 percent between June and July. Offsetting some of these increases were decreases in prices of beef and veal (about 1½ percent), lamb (about 3 percent), and other meats (about 1 percent). Fish prices increased less than 1 percent.

Increases in the prices of fresh milk in some cities were chiefly responsible for a rise of 0.7 percent in the Dairy Products index. The Cereals and Bakery Products index was up 0.2 percent. The most important change was an increase in bread prices in Los Angeles. Restaurant meal prices increased 0.2 percent on the average.

HOUSING The cost of Housing as a group rose 0.3 percent between June and July. The Rent index advanced 0.4 percent, reflecting rent increases in a number of cities, particularly Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Kansas City and St. Louis. Prices of Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil rose 1.6 percent during the month. Household Operation costs were up 0.3 percent, as further increases were reported for laundry and dry cleaning services. Cleaning supplies also were higher. Housefurnishings advanced slightly (0.1 percent) as higher prices were reported for cook stoves and electric light bulbs. Prices were higher for several items of home repair and maintenance. Rates for gas and electricity were unchanged on the average.

APPAREL Apparel prices in July were at the lowest level since January 1951, averaging 0.2 percent lower than in June. Shoe prices were lower in a number of cities, as were several items of women's and girls' apparel. Men's and boys' apparel averaged slightly higher.

OTHER GROUPS Higher fees for professional services were chiefly responsible for the increase of 0.3 percent in the Medical Care index between June and July.

Transportation costs rose 0.2 percent, with higher prices for gasoline and motor oil in most sections of the country. (Increases in gasoline and motor oil prices in cities not priced in July have not yet been reflected in the index). There were, however, further declines in used car prices.

Lower prices for television sets, radios, toys, and sporting goods were responsible for a decline of 0.4 percent in the index for Reading and Recreation.

Prices of Other Goods and Services rose 0.1 percent, and Personal Care remained at the June level.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

AUGUST 1953

Consumer Price Index ~~Rises~~ **Rises 0.3 Percent**
Between July and August 1953

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for August :
: 1953 for the average of U. S. cities and for individual :
: cities. The measure of price change from January 1953 :
: forward is based on the revised index structure. Infor- :
: mation about the index revision is given in the February :
: 1953 Monthly Labor Review or is available upon request. :

Retail prices of goods and services bought by urban families of wage earners and clerical workers continued upward, increasing 0.3 percent between July and August 1953, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Largely responsible for the increase were advances of 0.7 percent for Transportation and 0.3 percent for Food. Housing, Medical Care, and Reading and Recreation rose 0.2 percent; and Personal Care and Other Goods and Services averaged 0.1 percent higher than in July. Apparel prices, however, declined 0.1 percent during the month.

The U. S. All Items index for August 1953 was 115.0 (1947-49 = 100), 0.6 percent higher than a year ago and 13.0 percent above the level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the August index was 192.3.

FOOD The U. S. Food index rose 0.3 percent from July to August as average retail food prices increased in 34 of the 46 cities surveyed. The August index was 114.1 (1947-49 = 100), 2.1 percent below a year ago, but 13.5 percent above the June 1950 level. All food subgroup indexes were higher with the exception of the Fruits and Vegetables index which fell 4.7 percent during the month.

Average prices of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables decreased by about 9 percent and 6 percent respectively, as more abundant supplies of fresh produce reached retail stores in August. Prices of apples, watermelons, green beans and tomatoes were substantially lower. Oranges and potatoes were also cheaper. Lettuce prices, however, showed marked increases.

A 6 percent advance in beef and veal prices, the largest increase for these meats in any month since June 1948, caused a 1.9 percent increase in the index for Meats, Poultry and Fish. Poultry prices averaged over 1 percent higher while prices for pork, lamb and other meats increased slightly. Fish prices were somewhat lower over the month.

The Other Foods at Home index increased 1.9 percent as egg prices, still in a period of seasonal advance, rose more than 5 percent between July and August. Also contributing to the rise in this index were higher prices for lard, an important food item to consumers in Southern and smaller Western cities. Coffee prices also rose in most cities during the month.

The rise of 0.7 percent in the Dairy Products index resulted chiefly from price increases for fresh milk in several cities. Similarly, higher bread prices in a few places largely accounted for the 0.3 percent rise in the index of Cereals and Bakery Products. Prices of restaurant meals, on the average, were unchanged during the month.

HOUSING The rise of 0.2 percent in the Housing index was due mainly to an increase of 1.1 percent for Rent, following expiration of Federal rent controls July 31. Sixteen of the 46 cities in the index were still subject to Federal control as of that date. In 4 of these 16 cities, Federal controls were replaced by State or local controls. Decontrol or transfer to local controls had occurred prior to July 1953 in 24 of the remaining cities and 6 small cities were never under control. Prices of some home maintenance items were higher in a few cities. Costs of Gas and Electricity advanced in several cities, resulting in an average increase of 0.5 percent. Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil and Household Operation averaged 0.2 percent and 0.1 percent higher, respectively. Housefurnishings prices declined 0.6 percent, as August sales brought lower prices for sheets and drapery fabrics.

APPAREL Prices of apparel were 0.1 percent lower in August than in July, due mainly to lower prices for women's and girls' clothing. Prices of apparel for other family members were also lower on the average, although men's suits and footwear were higher in some cities.

OTHER GROUPS The rise of 0.7 percent in the Transportation index was caused primarily by the increase of transit fares in New York, effective July 25, 1953. Also contributing to the increase were higher prices for gasoline and motor oil in cities surveyed this month for the first time since the general rise in petroleum prices. Used car prices continued to decline.

Costs of Medical Care continued upward in August, with an increase of 0.2 percent. Higher fees were reported for hospital rooms and professional services.

Reading and Recreation rose 0.2 percent as higher admission charges for motion pictures more than offset decreases resulting from sale prices for television sets.

Personal Care and Other Goods and Services were 0.1 percent higher than in July.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

SEPTEMBER 1953

Consumer Price Index Up Slightly Between
August and September 1953.
Food Down; All Other Groups Up

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: September 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and :
: for individual cities. The measure of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index re- :
: vision is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :
:

A decline in retail food prices between August and September 1953 was not sufficient to offset higher prices for all other classes of consumer goods and services, and the Consumer Price Index increased by 0.2 percent, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Food declined 0.3 percent; Apparel was up 1.0 percent; Housing was up 0.3 percent; Medical Care costs rose 0.7 percent; Personal Care and Reading and Recreation, 0.2 percent; and Transportation and Other Goods and Services averaged 0.1 percent higher than in August.

The U. S. All Items index for September 1953 was 115.2 (1947-49 = 100). It was 1.0 percent higher than a year ago and 13.2 percent above the pre-Korea level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the September index was 192.6.

Retail prices have moved up gradually since February 1953 for a total rise of 1.6 percent. This has been due chiefly to increased charges for services. Commodity prices on the average have changed very little since the end of 1952, whereas service rates are up about 3 percent and rents more than 4 percent. These increases in services and rents continue the steady upward trend since pre-World War II, but even with these recent advances, prices of services and rents have not increased as much over their pre-war levels as have commodity prices.

FOOD Retail food prices averaged lower in 35 of the 46 cities, causing the U.S. Food index to decline 0.3 percent from August to September. The index for September was 113.8 (1947-49 = 100), 1.4 percent below September 1952, but 13.2 percent above the level of June 1950. The continued fall in the Fruits and Vegetables index (5.4 percent) along with a moderate decline of 0.5 percent in the Meats, Poultry and Fish index offset the advances made in other food subgroups during the month.

The largest decreases were in the smaller cities; food prices for the average of the five largest metropolitan centers increased. This difference in movement was due to a combination of factors, including bread price increases in some of the largest cities, as well as increases for beef and pork which were counter to the general trend elsewhere. Rising restaurant meal prices in these cities were a further contributing factor.

Price decreases averaged about 12 percent for fresh vegetables and 6 percent for fresh fruits. These were led by sharp reductions in the prices of tomatoes, lettuce, sweetpotatoes, apples, and grapes, reflecting more plentiful supplies of these items on the market.

Decreases averaging one percent or less occurred in the prices of beef and veal, pork, other meats, and poultry. Lamb prices were down about 5 percent. Prices of fish were slightly higher.

Except for cities surveyed in New England, egg prices continued their seasonal rise with an increase of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ percent over the month. This contributed heavily to the 2.0 percent advance in the index of Other Foods at Home. Higher prices for coffee and lard were also important in the movement of this subgroup.

The Cereals and Bakery Products index rose 0.7 percent as a result of higher bread prices in some cities. Prices of fresh milk went up in several places, chiefly accounting for the increase of 0.5 percent in the Dairy Products index. Restaurant meals averaged 0.6 percent higher.

HOUSING Housing costs rose 0.3 percent between August and September, as Rent and House-furnishings advanced 0.7 percent. Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil prices were 0.6 percent higher than in August, and Household Operation costs rose 0.2 percent during the month. Gas and electricity rates were unchanged on the average.

The Rent index in September was 6.5 percent higher than a year earlier and 15.9 percent above June 1950, reflecting continuing effects of rent decontrol.

The rise of 0.7 percent in prices of Housefurnishings was caused chiefly by increases in prices of sheets, following reductions for August sales, and higher prices for living room furniture and electric toasters in some cities. Lower prices were reported for washing machines.

In the Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil subgroup prices for bituminous coal, anthracite, and fuel oil all were higher. The increase in Household Operation costs was mainly due to rising prices for laundry service, laundry soap and detergents.

APPAREL The rise of 1.0 percent in apparel prices resulted chiefly from higher prices for fall and winter clothing items priced in September for the first time since the end of the previous winter season. Among these were women's and girls' wool coats, women's wool and rayon suits, and boys' wool suits. Prices also were higher for men's year-round suits, while lower prices were reported for men's work trousers. Most of the rise in apparel prices was for women's and girls' apparel, but prices were also slightly higher for footwear and clothing for other family members. On the average, apparel prices were 0.5 percent lower than a year ago.

OTHER GROUPS The rise of 0.7 percent in costs of Medical Care was due chiefly to higher rates for group hospitalization plans and dentists' fees in some cities.

Higher charges for beauty shop services were mainly responsible for the rise of 0.2 percent for Personal Care. Reading and Recreation costs averaged 0.2 percent higher than in August as higher motion picture theatre admissions more than offset price reductions for a number of commodities -- toys, sporting goods, and television sets.

Higher prices for gasoline and motor oil in cities surveyed for the first time since the general increases of early summer were the chief factor in the Transportation rise of 0.1 percent. Auto repair services also were higher in some cities. Prices of used cars, however, continued to decline throughout the country, and were responsible for declines in transportation indexes for four of the five large cities priced in August and September. Other Goods and Services rose 0.1 percent during the month.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

OCTOBER 1953

Consumer Prices Continue Upward Between
September and October Despite Decreasing Food Prices

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: October 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measure of price change from :
: January 1953 forward is based on the revised index :
: structure. Information about the index revision is :
: given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor Review or :
: is available upon request. :

The Consumer Price Index, representing retail prices of consumer goods and services, rose 0.2 percent between September and October 1953, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The changes in retail prices during the past month reflect a continuation of the trend of previous months. Again, lower food prices were more than offset by higher prices for other classes of goods and services. Food prices declined 0.2 percent between September and October; Housing costs rose 0.3 percent; Apparel, 0.2 percent; Other Goods and Services, 1.0 percent; Reading and Recreation, 0.7 percent; Medical Care, 0.2 percent; and Personal Care, 0.3 percent. Transportation costs were unchanged on the average.

The index for all items for October 1953 was 115.4 percent of the 1947-49 average, 1.1 percent higher than a year ago and 13.4 percent above the level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the October 1953 index was 192.9.

FOOD An average decrease of 0.2 percent in retail food prices between September and October brought the U.S. Food Index to 113.6 in October (1947-49 = 100). This was 1.2 percent less than the October 1952 index, but 13.0 percent above that of June 1950. The Meats, Poultry and Fish index declined 2.1 percent during the month while all other food subgroup indexes advanced 1 percent or less. Decreases in this group were reported in all but one of the 46 cities. A drop of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ percent in pork prices and nearly 2 percent in fresh chicken prices led this decline. This was the first sizable break in retail pork prices this year and reflected larger supplies on the market. Prices of beef and veal fell nearly 1 percent while lamb and other meats decreased slightly. Fish prices were unchanged during the month. Retail food prices averaged lower in 31 of the 46 cities surveyed, but, except in a few cities, the average change was small.

Prices of all Fruits and Vegetables combined were 1.0 percent higher with an increase of more than $6\frac{1}{2}$ percent in fresh vegetable prices and a decrease in fresh fruit prices of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent. Substantial increases were reported generally in prices of lettuce and tomatoes while price changes for other fresh vegetables varied from city to city, with some increasing and some decreasing. Apples, oranges, and lemons were lower in price.

Egg prices, rising more than 2 percent during the month, accounted for much of the 0.6 percent increase in the index of Other Foods at Home. The rise for eggs is somewhat less than seasonal. Most cities surveyed in Pacific Coast states as well as a few places on the East Coast, however, reported lower egg prices.

Increases in milk prices in about one-fourth of the cities were mainly responsible for the rise of 0.5 percent for Dairy Products. Butter prices were also somewhat higher. Prices of Cereals and Bakery Products were up 0.1 percent. Restaurant meal prices increased 0.4 percent, on the average.

HOUSING The rise of 0.3 percent in the Housing index between September and October was due primarily to an increase of 0.6 percent for Rent. The October rent index at 126.8 passed the previous peak reached in December 1924. Continuing to reflect the end of Federal rent control, rent increases occurred in most cities but were most prevalent in medium size cities. The substantial October 1 advance in rates for parcel post service resulted in a rise of 0.5 percent for Household Operation. Prices of Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil, which normally increase in the fall, were 0.9 percent higher than in September, and bills for Gas and Electricity were up 0.1 percent. Housefurnishings prices averaged unchanged during the month.

APPAREL Prices of Apparel rose 0.2 percent, due chiefly to the continued effect of introduction of fall and winter articles at higher prices than at the end of last season, especially for women's and girls' wear. Prices of men's and boys' clothing also rose slightly. Prices of children's shoes were higher. Prices of other apparel declined slightly.

OTHER GROUPS All other groups except Transportation increased. The rise of 1.0 percent in the index for Other Goods and Services was chiefly due to generally higher prices for beer, as higher wholesale costs were passed on to the consumer. Cigarette prices advanced in a few cities.

Higher admission charges in motion picture theatres, mostly temporary increases for "special" films, were a major factor in the 0.7 percent increase for Reading and Recreation. Prices also were higher for new model radios and television sets, and for television repair services.

Medical Care costs rose 0.2 percent, as further increases were reported for professional services.

Despite price reductions for toilet soap and cleansing tissues, the Personal Care index rose 0.3 percent as substantial increases for men's haircuts were reported for two cities.

Transportation costs remained at the September level with continued decreases in used car prices, but further advances in costs of automobile operation and maintenance.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

NOVEMBER 1953

Consumer Price Index Declines 0.3 Percent
Between October and November as Food
Prices Drop 1.4 Percent

This report presents the Consumer Price Index for
November 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and
for individual cities. The measure of price change
from January 1953 forward is based on the revised
index structure. Information about the index re-
vision is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor
Review or is available upon request.

Retail prices of goods and services bought by the nation's urban wage earners and clerical workers turned downward by 0.3 percent in November 1953, interrupting the gradual rise of the past eight months, the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Food prices, declining for the third consecutive month, dropped 1.4 percent over the month and were mainly responsible for the decrease in the All Items Index. Transportation costs were 0.5 percent lower than in October, and Apparel prices were unchanged on the average. All other groups of items rose during the month: Housing, 0.2 percent; Medical Care, 0.4 percent; Personal Care, 0.2 percent; Reading and Recreation, 0.3 percent; and Other Goods and Services, 0.4 percent.

The index for All Items for November 1953 was 115.0 percent of the 1947-49 average, 0.6 percent higher than a year ago and 13.0 percent above the level of June 1950. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the November 1953 index was 192.3.

FOOD The U.S. Food index fell 1.4 percent between October and November as average decreases in retail food prices were reported in all but one of the 46 cities surveyed. This was the largest monthly decline in food prices since last February when, as now, prices of meats and eggs dropped considerably. The November index was 112.0 (1947-49 = 100), 2.6 percent below a year ago, but 11.4 percent above the June 1950 index.

An average decrease of over 7 percent in pork prices (bacon declining about 11 percent) was accompanied by smaller price reductions in beef and veal (about 2½ percent), lamb (about 1½ percent), other meats (over 1 percent) and poultry (nearly 2 percent). Hog marketings reached a seasonal peak, and cattle marketings surpassed all previous records. Fish prices were slightly lower. These combined to produce the sharpest monthly decline (3.7 percent) in the Meats, Poultry and Fish index since February 1949.

The decrease of 2.2 percent in the index of Other Foods at Home was caused primarily by lower egg prices in nearly all cities. Between October and November, eggs dropped more than 8 percent in price, marking the end of the previous seasonal advance. Lard prices also decreased while margarine prices rose in most cities.

Fruit and Vegetable prices decreased 0.3 percent, on the average, but group changes and changes in the prices of individual items varied considerably from city to city. The average of fresh fruit prices was down slightly. Fresh vegetables averaged a bit

higher in price. Increases in fresh produce prices were most frequently reported for apples, green beans and tomatoes, the latter rising substantially. Prices of lettuce and oranges were generally lower. Canned fruits and vegetables decreased 0.4 percent.

Increases in milk prices in New York and St. Louis along with small advances in butter prices in many cities accounted for most of the 0.4 percent rise in the Dairy Products index over the month. Prices for Cereals and Bakery Products were up 0.2 percent on the average. Restaurant meal prices were down 0.1 percent.

HOUSING The rise of 0.2 percent in the Housing index was due in large measure to continued rent increases, following the end of Federal rent control on July 31, combined with smaller advances for other subgroups. Rents rose 0.4 percent between October and November. An increase in telephone rates in Houston was the chief factor in the rise of 0.3 percent for Household Operation. Prices of laundry soap were generally lower.

The Housefurnishings index was up 0.2 percent, but both higher and lower prices were reported for a number of items. Among items with higher prices were bedroom suites and sheets, which generally returned to regular prices following sales. Gas and Electricity was 0.3 percent higher than in October, as gas rates were advanced in several cities. Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil prices rose 0.2 percent during the month.

APPAREL Prices of Apparel remained at the October level and there were no significant movements among the subgroups. Among individual items prices of men's shirts and topcoats, women's shoes and boys' jackets were higher in a number of cities while in others decreases were reported for women's fur coats and rayon blouses, and diapers.

OTHER GROUPS Transportation costs declined 0.5 percent between October and November, primarily as the result of further decreases in prices of used cars. Prices of gasoline were lower in a few cities and auto repairs advanced slightly.

Medical Care costs rose 0.4 percent as additional increases in rates were reported for hospital and professional services.

Personal Care costs increased 0.2 percent, with scattered reports of higher prices of toilet soap and other items.

Reading and Recreation was 0.3 percent higher than in October, as additional motion picture theatres showed "special" attractions at increased rates. Prices of sporting goods were lower. Price changes for television sets were mixed, with some stores reporting lower prices for 1953 models and other stores reporting higher prices for some new models.

Other Goods and Services rose 0.4 percent during the month, as beer prices continued to advance.

:NOTE: For the convenience of users who have contractual :
:arrangements with indexes on the base of 1935-39 = 100, :
:the Bureau will continue to publish, on the 1935-39 base, :
:during 1954 the all-items indexes as revised January 1953 :
:for the U.S. and each of the 20 cities. :

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

DECEMBER 1953

Continued Stability in Consumer Prices;
Index Declines Slightly Between November and December

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: December 1953 for the average of U.S. cities and for :
: individual cities. The measure of price change from :
: January 1953 forward is based on the revised index :
: structure. Information about the index revision is :
: given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor Review or :
: is available upon request. :

Continued stability marked the Consumer Price Index at the end of 1953. Retail prices of consumer goods and services registered a slight decline (0.1 percent) between November and December 1953, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Decreases of 0.9 percent for Transportation and 0.2 percent for Apparel were responsible for the decline. Food prices rose 0.3 percent during the month; Medical Care and Personal Care were up 0.2 percent, and Other Goods and Services averaged 0.1 percent higher than in November. Housing and Reading and Recreation were unchanged on the average.

The All Items index for December 1953 was 114.9 (1947-49 = 100). It was 0.7 percent higher than a year ago and 12.9 percent above the June 1950 level. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the December index was 192.1.

FOOD Retail food prices averaged higher in 31 of the 46 cities surveyed as the U.S. Food index rose 0.3 percent between November and December. This halted the decline in food prices which had been in progress since August. The Food index for December was 112.3 (1947-49 = 100), 1.3 percent below December 1952, but 11.7 percent above the June 1950 index.

Prices of Fruits and Vegetables were up 1.7 percent on the average, led by a sharp increase in fresh tomato prices. Oranges and apples also increased while lettuce was generally cheaper. Prices for other fresh produce showed relatively small changes over the month.

Advances in pork prices, averaging around 3 percent, more than offset decreases of about 1 percent or less in average prices of beef and veal, lamb, other meats, poultry and fish. This caused the Meats, Poultry and Fish index to rise 0.7 percent. Bread and flour prices advanced in several cities. Restaurant meal prices were up 0.3 percent.

Egg prices, falling about 5 percent between November and December, largely accounted for the 1.1 percent decline in the Other Foods at Home index. By December 15, coffee prices in retail stores (up 0.1 percent over the month) had not yet reflected the more recent advances in wholesale markets. Prices of Dairy Products averaged 0.3 percent lower as decreases in milk prices were reported for several Midwestern cities.

HOUSING The Housing index remained at the level of November 1953, as increases of 0.2 percent for Rent and 0.1 percent for Household Operation were offset by

2

decreases of 0.5 percent for Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil (principally fuel oil), 0.2 percent for Housefurnishings, and 0.1 percent for Gas and Electricity. Electricity rates were reduced in one city. Some household durable goods were reported on sale.

APPAREL There was a decline of 0.2 percent in Apparel prices between November and December. Prices were reduced for women's and girls' coats and women's wool suits. Scattered price decreases were reported for men's and boys' apparel, footwear, and other apparel.

OTHER GROUPS The decrease of 0.9 percent in Transportation during the month resulted chiefly from substantial reductions in prices of some 1953 model automobiles just prior to the introduction of the 1954 models. Prices of used cars continued to decline throughout the country. Transit fares were raised in a few cities.

Medical Care prices rose 0.2 percent, as fees for professional services continued upward. The rise of 0.2 percent in Personal Care was due mainly to higher prices for toilet soap and beauty shop services.

Reading and Recreation remained at the level of the previous month. Some reductions were reported in prices of television sets, while motion picture theatre admission charges were higher. The rise of 0.1 percent for Other Goods and Services reflected higher prices for beer.

YEAR-END SUMMARY The Consumer Price Index for all goods and services moved over a narrow range during 1953, declining slightly in January and February, then rising for eight months, and declining again in November and December. Monthly percent changes were small, not exceeding 0.4 percent in either direction. The total rise during the year was 0.7 percent. In the main increases were concentrated in rents and service items; food prices decreased 1.3 percent and some other commodity prices weakened, in keeping with primary market prices.

Food prices were the most volatile, even though the change over the year was less than for many other groups. There were seasonal fluctuations in fresh fruits and vegetables and eggs and significant contrasting price movements of beef and pork. Except for a sharp upturn between July and August, beef prices dropped steadily over the year for a total decrease of nearly 20 percent. Pork rose throughout the first half of the year, reaching a new all time peak in August. The total rise in pork prices over the year was over 16 percent. There was a persistent price decline for potatoes, amounting to nearly 40 percent during the year. Restaurant meal prices were about 2 percent higher than a year earlier.

Housing prices rose steadily, for a total increase of 2.1 percent, due mainly to Rent, which advanced 5.7 percent to new record levels. Rents rose uninterruptedly in 1953, with the largest monthly increase, 1.1 percent, reported in August, immediately following removal of Federal rent controls. The Household Operation index also advanced steadily (3.2 percent) as prices rose for dry cleaning and laundry service, postage, and telephone service. Gas and Electricity and Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil moved up about $1\frac{1}{2}$ %.

The index for Other Goods and Services was up 3.8 percent, principally because prices of beer and cigarettes, unlike most commodities, rose substantially. Prices of Medical Care increased 3.6 percent, as fees for hospital and professional services continued up gradually throughout most of the year. Reading and Recreation and Personal Care each advanced about 1 percent with higher prices for newspapers, motion picture admissions, television repair services, and beauty and barber shop services. As the result of the substantial year-end decline, the Transportation index in December 1953 was at the same level as in December 1952. Prices of new cars were lower at the year-end and prices of used cars declined steadily throughout the year. Gasoline, motor oil, auto repairs, railroad and transit fares were higher than at the beginning of the year.

Apparel prices in December 1953 were 0.2 percent higher than in December 1952. The largest monthly change, an increase of 1.0 percent, occurred in September when pricing of a number of fall and winter items was resumed for the first time since the end of the previous winter season.

LS 54-2123

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 3-2420
Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

JANUARY 1954

Consumer Prices Rise 0.3 Percent Between
December 1953 and January 1954

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: January 1954 for the average of U.S. cities and :
: for individual cities. The measure of price change:
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index :
: revision is given in the February 1953 Monthly :
: Labor Review or is available upon request. :

Prices of goods and services bought by wage and clerical workers' families rose 0.3 percent between December 1953 and January 1954, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The increase in January counterbalanced the decrease which occurred in December but did not bring the index back to the level of last October. The groups mainly responsible for the upturn were Food (up 0.7 percent during the month) and Transportation (up 1.2 percent). Medical Care and Personal Care each advanced 0.1 percent. Prices of Apparel declined 0.4 percent; and Reading and Recreation decreased 0.2 percent. Prices of Housefurnishings declined but rents again increased. Other Goods and Services were unchanged on the average.

The All Items index for January was 115.2 percent of the 1947-49 average, 1.1 percent higher than a year ago and 13.2 percent above the June 1950 level. Converted to a 1935-39 = 100 base, the January index was 192.6.

FOOD Price increases for pork, coffee, and some fresh vegetables were the principal factors contributing to a rise of 0.7 percent in the Food index between December and January. This rise brought the U.S. Food index to 113.1 (1947-49 = 100) in January 1954. The index was at the same level as a year ago, but 12.5 percent above the June 1950 index. Food prices averaged higher than a month ago in all but two of the 46 cities surveyed.

The Meats, Poultry and Fish index rose 2.2 percent over the month as pork prices increased about $6\frac{1}{2}$ percent. Lamb prices were up nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent and beef and veal, other meats, and fish averaged slightly higher. Poultry prices declined about 2 percent.

Prices of fresh vegetables were up 5 percent on the average, partly as the result of cold weather and transportation difficulties due to snow storms. Sharp increases were reported generally for lettuce and green beans. Tomato prices fell in the large Eastern cities and rose in West Coast cities. Orange prices were down in most places. The Fruits and Vegetables index rose 1.5 percent over the month.

The Cereals and Bakery Products index increased 0.2 percent as bread prices were raised in several cities. Coffee prices rose 3 percent, on the average, as sharp price advances of green coffee were partly reflected at retail levels throughout the country by mid-January. Egg prices, which usually decline in January, were down $3\frac{1}{2}$ percent.

Decreases in milk prices in several cities brought about most of the 0.5 percent decline in the Dairy Products index. The average price of restaurant meals decreased slightly over the month.

HOUSING The decline of 0.1 percent in the Housing index was due mainly to a decrease of 0.8 percent in prices of housefurnishings. Prices of sheets and other household textiles, washing machines, and refrigerators were reduced in January sales. Bills for Gas and Electricity were 0.1 percent lower than in December. Other components of Housing were higher, as Rent advanced 0.2 percent, Household Operation 0.2 percent, and Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil 0.3 percent.

APPAREL The Apparel index declined 0.4 percent between December and January as prices were reduced in January sales for women's and girls' coats, boys' jackets, and other items. On the average women's and girls' clothing decreased 0.7 percent and men's and boys' clothing 0.2 percent. Prices of footwear were slightly higher.

OTHER GROUPS The significant rise of 1.2 percent in the Transportation index during the month was largely due to the introduction of 1954 model automobiles at prices which were substantially higher than the end-of-season prices charged for old models. Automobile registration fees for the new models were higher in some states. Gasoline prices rose in several cities, but "price wars" were reported in others. Prices of used cars continued to decline during the month.

The Medical Care index rose 0.1 percent, reflecting higher fees for hospital services and prescriptions. The advance of 0.1 percent for Personal Care was due to higher prices for beauty shop services and cosmetics.

The Reading and Recreation index declined 0.2 percent as sale prices were reported for television sets, toys, and sporting goods. Movie admissions were raised for special features in some cities.

The index of Other Goods and Services was unchanged from a month ago.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

EXECUTIVE 3-2420
Moffatt - Ext. 532

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

FEBRUARY 1954

Consumer Prices Decline 0.2 Percent
Between January and February 1954

: This report presents the Consumer Price Index for :
: February 1954 for the average of U.S. cities and :
: for individual cities. The measure of price change :
: from January 1953 forward is based on the revised :
: index structure. Information about the index re- :
: vision is given in the February 1953 Monthly Labor :
: Review or is available upon request. :

Consumer prices decreased 0.2 percent between January and February, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Food prices were 0.4 percent lower than in January; Transportation declined 0.8 percent; Reading and Recreation, 0.6 percent; Apparel, 0.2 percent; and Other Goods and Services, 0.1 percent. The Housing index rose 0.1 percent, Medical Care was up 0.3 percent, and Personal Care, 0.2 percent.

The All Items index for February was 115.0 percent of the 1947-49 average, 0.3 percent below the peak reached in October 1953; it was 1.4 percent higher than a year ago, and 13.0 percent above the June 1950 level. Converted to a base of 1935-39 = 100, the index was 192.3.

FOOD Retail food prices in February were down an average of 0.4 percent from January levels. Price reductions for fresh vegetables, meats, poultry, milk, and eggs led the decline. The Food index fell to 112.6 (1947-49 = 100), but was still 1.0 percent higher than a year ago and 12.0 percent above the June 1950 index. Of the 46 cities surveyed, 39 reported lower average food prices.

Fruits and Vegetables, on the average, were 2.5 percent lower than in January. Significant price decreases for carrots, lettuce, and tomatoes accounted for most of the 7 percent fall in fresh vegetable prices. Potato prices went up 1.2 percent after a drop of more than 40 percent during the past year. Fresh fruits averaged slightly less in price. Canned and frozen orange juice prices were lower in most cities.

Price decreases reported for poultry and most cuts of beef and pork, with bacon the chief exception, combined to lower the Meats, Poultry and Fish index 0.5 percent between January and February. Declines averaged over 2 1/2 percent for fresh chickens and nearly 1 percent for beef and veal. Lamb, other meats, and fish averaged slightly higher in price.

Lower prices for fresh milk in more than one-third of the cities surveyed were the main reason for the 0.6 percent decline in the Dairy Products index.

The index of Other Foods at Home went up 0.4 percent. Egg prices were lower in most places -- down more than 2 percent for all cities combined. However, the increase in coffee prices during the month averaged over 5 percent, making the total rise since December 1953 about 8 1/2 percent. The U.S. average price for coffee was 99.4 cents per pound in mid-February and there have been reports of further increases since that time.

The Cereals and Bakery Products index was 0.1 percent higher. Restaurant meals were also up slightly.

HOUSING The Housing index increased 0.1 percent during the month. Rents continued their gradual upward movement, advancing 0.1 percent between January and February. The index for Gas and Electricity rose 0.4 percent, reflecting higher rates for electricity. Higher prices for fuel oil were reflected in a rise of 0.4 percent in the index of Solid Fuels and Fuel Oil. The increase of 0.1 percent in Household Operation resulted from higher prices for laundry soap and increased rates for domestic service.

Prices of Housefurnishings remained at the January level, lower than at any time in the last three years. In some cities, prices of housefurnishings returned to regular prices from January sale prices, but traditional sales were extended into February by a number of retailers in other cities. There were increasing reports that mark-down prices were becoming new regular prices.

APPAREL The decline of 0.2 percent in Apparel prices resulted principally from lower prices for women's nylon hose, men's work trousers and overalls, and a number of other apparel items. On the average, prices of women's and girls' clothing declined 0.3 percent, while men's and boys' clothing was unchanged during the month. Some spring apparel came onto the market at prices higher than the end-of-season sale prices last spring. Lower priced lines of spring dresses were reported to be made of better quality fabrics than previously.

OTHER GROUPS The Transportation index declined 0.8 percent, reflecting substantially lower prices for used cars and some downward adjustments in new car prices. Street-car and bus fares were raised in a few cities and auto repairs were slightly higher than a month ago.

The Reading and Recreation index decreased 0.6 percent, due to sale prices for television sets and radios and substantial reductions in motion picture theatre admission charges. Many theatres returned to their regular prices following temporary increases for special features.

The Medical Care index rose 0.3 percent, as prescriptions and hospital services advanced in price. The rise of 0.2 percent in the Personal Care index resulted chiefly from higher prices for toilet soap.

The index for Other Goods and Services declined slightly -- 0.1 percent over the month.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

MARCH 1954

Consumer Price Index Down 0.2 Percent
Between February and March 1954

This report presents the Consumer Price Index :
for the U.S. and for individual cities. A de- :
scription of the index is available on request.:

Consumer prices in U.S. cities decreased 0.2 percent between February and March, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Food and apparel prices were 0.4 percent lower on the average. Transportation was down 0.3 percent. Rents and services continued to rise. Rents were up 0.1 percent; Medical Care, Personal Care, and Reading and Recreation each advanced 0.2 percent.

The All Items index for March was 114.8 (1947-49 = 100), 0.5 percent below the October 1953 peak. It was 1.1 percent higher than a year ago, and 12.8 percent above the level of June 1950. On a base of 1935-39 = 100, the index for March was 191.9.

Reductions in excise taxes and in the support price of butter, which became effective April 1, are not yet reflected in the index.

FOOD The food index, at 112.1 (1947-49 = 100), was 0.4 percent above a year ago, but about 4 percent below its August 1952 peak. From February to March, egg prices dropped nearly 12 percent, with seasonal declines reported throughout the country. Dairy products dropped 0.9 percent. Milk prices were reduced 1 to 5 percent in many cities and butter and cheese prices fell 1 percent. Prices of all cuts of beef, veal and pork (except pork chops) decreased. Potato prices continued to decline, going down by 5 percent over the month. Prices of most fresh produce were higher. Coffee prices went up about 6 percent to bring the average price for the nation to over \$1.05 a pound, 15 percent higher than last December. Bread prices were reduced in a few cities. Restaurant meals averaged slightly higher in March.

HOUSING Average residential rents increased 0.1 percent over the month, but some scattered decreases were reported. The rate of increase in rents has slowed considerably since November 1953 as the effects of decontrol have largely been dissipated. Sales on housefurnishings items continued in some cities while in others prices returned to earlier levels.

APPAREL After four months of steady decline, apparel prices were over 1 percent below October 1953. Work clothing prices -- on overalls, work trousers, shirts and dungarees -- have been reduced 20¢ to 50¢ in the last 3 months. Women's hosiery prices continued their steady decline. Spring seasonal clothing prices were higher than at the end of last spring.

OTHER GOODS AND SERVICES Used car prices were lower in March in most cities and some price reductions by dealers were reported for new cars.

Charges for services -- medical care, personal care and reading and recreation -- again advanced. Further increases were recorded for doctor's fees and other medical care services; some motion picture theatres raised prices for special features; barber and beauty shop charges continued to advance generally. Laundry and toilet soaps were higher in most cities, reflecting higher prices for fats and oils at wholesale. Prices of other toilet articles also increased.

Issued May 21, 1954

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - APRIL 1954

Consumer prices in U.S. cities declined 0.2 percent between March and April, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Reductions in Federal excise taxes, which became effective April 1, resulted in average reductions in groups of goods and services including Housefurnishings, Household Operation, Personal Care, and Recreation. Continued increases in Rent, Medical Care, and other personal services, and a moderate advance in average food prices, offset much of the tax reduction.

The All Items index for April was 114.6 (1947-49 = 100), 0.7 percent below the October 1953 peak, but 0.8 percent higher than a year ago and 12.6 percent above the June 1950 level. On a 1935-39 base, the index for April was 191.6.

FOOD The total food index rose 0.3 percent over the month, to 112.4 (1947-49 = 100). This was 0.8 percent above April of last year but 3.6 percent under the August 1952 peak. Prices of some fresh fruits and vegetables rose sharply, with oranges up almost 9 percent, apples up around 5 percent, and fresh strawberries considerably higher than at the end of last season. Potato prices increased nearly 4 percent, onions nearly 12 percent, and lettuce about 7 percent. Average prices of pork, lamb, poultry, and fish were higher but beef and veal prices declined slightly. The price of coffee rose to an average of nearly \$1.14 a pound, up 8 percent for the month and over 24 percent since last December. Butter dropped 11 percent in price during the month, reflecting lower Government support prices, and was selling at a nation-wide average of 70¢ a pound, lowest since May 1947. Egg prices continued down in most cities, averaging 4.1 percent lower than a month ago. Restaurant meals were slightly higher.

HOUSING Rents continued their slow advance of recent months although isolated decreases were reported in some of the smaller cities. The total rise in rent since last July, when Federal controls were removed from cities still under control, has been about 3.6 percent, of which only 0.5 percent has occurred in the four months since December 1953.

Most of the manufacturers' excise tax reductions on refrigerators, stoves, toasters, and other household appliances were passed on to customers, resulting in average price reductions of about 3 percent at retail. The Housefurnishings index in April was at its lowest level in over 3 years. Seasonally lower prices on coal and fuel oil were reported in some cities. Charges for laundry and dry cleaning services were higher, and prices of detergents, and laundry and toilet soap advanced, reflecting higher costs for fats and oils. Telephone rates decreased nearly 4 percent as a result of reduced Federal excise taxes.

APPAREL Apparel prices decreased on the average for the fifth consecutive month. Prices of work clothing continued lower and prices of women's handbags were reduced by tax cuts. Although price changes were small, there were reports that consumers were being offered wider choices in cotton dresses and many other items of clothing, with improved workmanship, quality of fabric, and styling. Prices of men's light weight suits were higher than at the close of the previous season.

OTHER COMMODITIES AND SERVICES In the Transportation group, some local transit fare increases and a sharp rise in gasoline prices following a price war were reported. Used car prices continued to fall throughout the country, and lower excise taxes reduced railroad fares by 4 percent. Scattered reports indicated that some dealers offered liberal trade-in allowances on new car purchases.

Increased movie admissions were reported from many sections of the country, offsetting most of the excise tax reduction. Medical fees continued to advance.

Lower prices for sporting goods and toiletries reflected tax cuts. Face powder and face cream prices were about 8 1/2 percent lower. With dealer inventories still high, sales on television and radio sets continued in some cities.

Issued June 22, 1954

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - MAY 1954

Consumer prices in U.S. cities advanced 0.3 percent between April and May, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The increase, which halted the downward movement of the last three months, mainly resulted from advances of 0.8 percent in food prices and 0.3 percent for housing. Other groups of goods and services were substantially unchanged during the month.

The all items index for May was 115.0 percent of the 1947-49 average, 0.9 percent higher than a year ago, and 13.0 percent above the June 1950 level. On a 1935-39 base, the May index was 192.3.

FOOD The rise of 0.8 percent in food prices, the largest monthly increase since June 1953, brought the food index for May to 113.3 (1947-49 = 100). This was 1.1 percent higher than a year ago and 12.7 percent above the level of June 1950. Food prices averaged higher in 45 of the 46 cities surveyed.

Fresh vegetable prices rose sharply during the month. Supplies of some vegetables were curtailed by cold weather. Prices of tomatoes and lettuce were up almost 20 percent; onions, 18 percent; and potatoes, 11 percent. Prices of green beans were nearly 6 percent lower than a month ago. Oranges and apples rose about 5 percent between April and May, and strawberry prices dropped 20 percent. Prices of frozen orange juice concentrate advanced 11 percent, and canned orange juice rose slightly, bringing to an end the downward movement in prices which began last fall as a result of the large Florida orange crop.

Coffee prices continued upward during May, to reach an average of \$1.18 a pound.

Prices of most meats advanced during the month, reflecting recent increases at wholesale. Round steak and pork chops were up almost 2 percent; ham, 1½ percent; and bacon, 1 percent. Poultry prices declined about 3½ percent between April and May, as young chickens continued in abundant supply.

Egg prices, reflecting heavy production, dropped for the seventh consecutive month, from an average of 79.5 cents a dozen last October to 53.8 cents a dozen in May. A reduction in the size of chocolate candy bars resulted in a price increase of 2 percent.

Prices of all dairy products except ice cream showed further declines, reflecting seasonal decreases and continued effects of the reduction in support prices on April 1.

HOUSING

Average increases of 0.1 percent were reported for residential rent and gas and electricity between April and May. Prices of laundry soap and detergents continued to rise. Anthracite prices dropped $5\frac{1}{2}$ percent, while bituminous coal and fuel oil were down about 2 percent. Substantial reductions in prices of sheets and some other household goods were reported in May sales. The rise in the housing index between April and May, however, was due mainly to the introduction at this time of changes which occurred during the past year in rates for mortgage interest, real estate taxes, and fire insurance on homes.

OTHER COMMODITIES
AND SERVICES

Price changes in other groups during May were relatively small. A few stores reported small increases for men's business shirts and undershirts, while some shoe stores marked down children's shoes for special sales. Some physicians and dentists raised their fees, and hospital services advanced slightly. Personal care services were up, as were toilet soap and cleansing tissues. Prices of television sets decreased as new models came on the market at lower prices.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - JUNE 1954

Consumer prices in U. S. cities rose 0.1 percent between May and June 1954, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The rise mainly resulted from the increase of 0.4 percent in food prices. Prices of other commodities and services averaged slightly lower than in May, with decreases of 0.2 percent for transportation and 0.3 percent for personal care.

The Consumer Price Index for June was 115.1 percent of the 1947-49 average, 0.5 percent higher than a year ago and 13.1 percent above the level of June 1950. On a 1935-39 base, the June index was 192.4.

FOOD Food prices, advancing for the third consecutive month, brought the food index to 113.8 percent of the 1947-49 average. It was 1.5 percent higher than 3 months ago, 0.1 percent above a year ago, and 13.2 percent above the level of June 1950.

Fresh fruit prices rose 7 percent during the month, as higher quotations were reported for all fruits priced except lemons. Apples and oranges advanced seasonally; bananas rose 12 percent, reflecting lower supplies due to strikes and unsettled conditions in the producing areas; and strawberries were up 6-1/2 percent. Prices of fresh vegetables averaged 2 percent lower than in May, as increasing local supplies resulted in reductions of 28-1/2 percent for tomatoes, 25-1/2 percent for green beans, 24 percent for lettuce, and 13 percent for cabbage. Advances of 27 percent were reported for new crop potatoes, and celery prices rose 14 percent.

Coffee prices rose 2-1/2 percent during the month to an average price of \$1.21 a pound.

Egg prices declined 1-1/2 percent between May and June.

Prices of meats declined slightly during the month, as reductions for bacon and ham offset higher prices for pork chops and for all cuts of beef. Pork chop prices have advanced from an average of 85 cents a pound in February to 93 cents in June. Poultry prices were 1-1/2 percent higher than a month ago.

Prices of dairy products declined seasonally with reductions of almost 1 percent for fresh milk and cheese, and smaller decreases for other items.

OTHER COMMODITIES
AND SERVICES

Average prices of other commodities and services were relatively stable between May and June. Higher charges for home maintenance services offset minor decreases in gas bills and slightly lower prices for some electrical appliances and textile housefurnishings in the housing group. Rents were unchanged on the average, although small advances continued to be reported in the largest metropolitan areas. Prices of laundry soap and detergents continued upward, but toilet soap prices were generally lower.

Lower prices were reported for men's and boys' slacks, and men's summer suits in some areas. Cotton apparel prices were generally lower, reflecting lower mill prices for fabrics. Higher prices were reported for women's shoes in some cities, and prices of summer apparel items were higher than at the end of the last season.

Gasoline "price wars" were reported in several cities; sale prices for automobile tires were widespread; and charges for some auto repair services were reduced. Used car prices advanced slightly in most cities.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - JULY 1954

Consumer prices in U. S. cities in July 1954 were 0.1 percent higher than in June, according to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The principal factor in the rise during the month was an advance of 0.7 percent in food prices, although most of this advance was offset by average decreases of 1.7 percent in transportation and 0.2 percent in apparel prices. Indexes for housing, medical care, personal care, and reading and recreation also rose slightly during the month.

The Consumer Price Index for July was 115.2 (1947-49 = 100). It was 0.4 percent higher than a year ago and 13.2 percent above the level of June 1950. The July index on a 1935-39 = 100 base was 192.6.

FOOD The rise of 0.7 percent in food prices brought the food index to 114.6 percent of the 1947-49 average, 0.7 percent higher than a year ago, and 14.0 percent above the June 1950 level. Higher food prices were reported in all but 9 Western cities.

The advance in food prices mainly resulted from higher prices in Central and Eastern cities for some fresh fruits and vegetables in short supply, and seasonal increases for milk and eggs. Average prices of oranges rose 10 percent; potatoes, 8 percent; tomatoes, 7-1/2 percent; and green beans, 22-1/2 percent. Egg prices advanced 7 percent on the average. Fresh milk prices rose more than 2 percent, offsetting some of the decrease in the dairy product group reported since reductions in price supports became effective April 1, 1954.

The rise in coffee prices continued up to mid-July, with increases reported in most cities. The average price for coffee in July was \$1.23 per pound. In the latter part of July some weakness appeared in wholesale coffee markets.

Reduced prices were reported for all pork items; bacon dropped 6 percent; ham, 2 percent; and chops, 1 percent. Poultry prices advanced seasonally about 1 percent over the month.

HOUSING Residential rents rose 0.2 percent on the average, although some lower rents were reported in a few cities. Coal prices advanced somewhat from recent seasonal lows. The average decline of 0.1 percent in prices of housefurnishings resulted partly from reported sale prices for household textiles, appliances, and some furniture items.

OTHER COMMODITIES
AND SERVICES

Lower prices of new automobiles reflected substantial reductions from list prices reported by dealers. Gasoline prices continued to decline on the average.

Apparel prices were generally lower as sales were reported for a number of items, including men's and boys' sport shirts, men's summer suits, women's and girls' cotton dresses, and nylon hose. Prices of women's and children's shoes advanced slightly.

The price of cigarettes rose during the month, due largely to higher local sales taxes in some cities.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - AUGUST 1954

Consumer prices in U.S. cities decreased 0.2 percent between July and August 1954, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The decrease resulted mainly from lower food prices, although prices of apparel, housefurnishings, reading and recreation, new cars, and gasoline also decreased. Rents, fuel, some local transportation rates, medical care, and personal care rose slightly during the month.

The Consumer Price Index for August was 115.0 percent of the 1947-49 average, the same as a year ago, but 13.0 percent above the level of June 1950. The August index on a 1935-39 base was 192.3.

FOOD The decline of 0.6 percent in food prices between July and August followed a 4-months' rise totaling 2.2 percent. The August food index was 113.9 (1947-49 =100), 0.2 percent lower than a year ago, but 13.3 percent above the level of June 1950.

Chiefly responsible for the decline during the month were substantial decreases in prices of fresh fruits and vegetables and of meats. Prices of most fresh vegetables declined during August. Tomato prices fell 21 percent; sweet potatoes and green beans dropped 17 percent; celery, almost 10 percent; and potatoes, 9 percent. Prices of all fresh fruits (except oranges) were lower than in July, with decreases of 30 percent for grapes, 27 percent for peaches, 9-1/2 percent for bananas, and 9 percent for apples. Orange prices rose 12-1/2 percent during the month, reflecting the short California crop.

Price decreases were reported for every cut of meat priced for the index, reflecting the effects of increased marketing of livestock. Bacon, pork chops, and leg of lamb were about 4-1/2 percent lower than in July; chuck roast declined 2-1/2 percent; rib roast, veal cutlets, hamburger, and frankfurters, about 1-1/2 percent; and ham prices were 1 percent lower than a month ago.

Prices of eggs and fresh milk advanced seasonally. Bread prices were 1-1/2 percent higher than in July. There was a slight increase in the U.S. average price of coffee, but decreases were reported in about half the cities in the index.

HOUSING Residential rents continued their slight upward trend, with an average rise of 0.1 percent between July and August. Prices of some home maintenance items advanced during the month, and coal and fuel oil prices rose seasonally. Sale prices of furniture and household textiles were reported in a number of cities. Prices for major household appliances were lowered in many cities to meet competition.

OTHER COMMODITIES
AND SERVICES

Lower prices were reported for women's nylon hose and lingerie. Men's suits were reduced in some cities and prices of work gloves were lower. Prices of children's shoes advanced during the month.

In the transportation group, price reductions for new automobiles, tires, and gasoline were offset by increased prices for auto repairs and higher streetcar and bus fares in several cities.

Prices were lower for television sets, radios, and toys, while motion picture theatre admission charges were raised in some cities. Higher fees were reported for physicians' services and group hospitalization.

Issued October 26, 1954

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - SEPTEMBER 1954

Consumer prices in American cities averaged 0.3 percent lower in September than in August 1954, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. A decrease of 1.3 percent in food prices was mainly responsible for the decline, although costs of transportation and reading and recreation also went down. Prices of apparel, housefurnishings, medical care, residential rents, fuel, and personal care advanced during the month.

The Consumer Price Index for September 1954 was 114.7 (1947-49=100), 0.4 percent lower than a year ago, but 12.7 percent above the June 1950 level. On the 1935-39 base, the September index was 191.8.

FOOD The food price index in September was 112.4. The decline of 1.3 percent during the month was the largest change in any month since November 1953. Food prices in September averaged 1.2 percent lower than a year ago, 3.6 percent below the record high level of August 1952, but 11.8 percent higher than in June 1950.

The largest single factor in the decline in food prices between August and September was coffee, which had risen steadily in price since December 1953. Decreasing from an August average of \$1.233 per pound to \$1.116 in mid-September, coffee was 9½ percent lower than a month ago, but still 22 percent higher than last December. September coffee prices were lower in all 46 cities in the index, with reductions of from 3 to 13 percent from August.

Decreases in prices of fresh fruits and vegetables also were important in the food index decline during the month, as more plentiful local supplies reached the market. Largest decreases were for potatoes (down 11½ percent), apples (down 13½ percent), and tomatoes (down almost 20 percent). Prices of sweetpotatoes, grapes, onions, celery, and green beans also were lower than in August. Orange prices continued to rise during September, as the California crop was short and the Florida crop had not yet reached the market. Since March of this year, orange prices have advanced almost 50 percent, to their highest level since 1920.

Record production brought egg prices down during the month, although an increase is usual in September. Continued large supplies of pork contributed to price reductions of 4 percent for ham and 2 percent for bacon. Prices of chuck roast and round steak were higher.

Fresh milk prices rose 1 percent between August and September, as is usual at this time of year.

HOUSING The housing index, which includes household furnishings and maintenance, as well as rents, rose 0.3 percent between August and September, reflecting higher prices for sheets (after August sales), rugs, and some furniture and appliances. Rents continued upwards, advancing 0.2 percent during the month. Prices of coal and fuel oil advanced seasonally. Some home maintenance items also were higher than in August. However, prices of bedroom suites, refrigerators, and sewing machines declined in a number of large cities.

APPAREL Women's and girls' fall and winter apparel returned to the market at prices higher than those at the end of the previous season. The largest increases were for women's plain and fur-trimmed coats and rayon dresses. Lower prices of women's moderately-priced fur coats reflect the reduction in Federal excise taxes. Prices of women's year-round apparel advanced during the month as higher prices were reported for rayon dresses and lingerie, following the August sales. Higher prices for men's suits were offset by reductions in prices of work clothing. Men's fall and winter clothing returned to the market at about the level prevailing at the end of the previous season. Prices of footwear declined between August and September, returning to their July level.

OTHER COMMODITIES

AND SERVICES New car prices again declined, as dealers continued to make price concessions of various types. Prices of tires were lower than in August. Gasoline prices advanced in some cities, although there were price wars in others.

Most of the increase in medical care was due to higher rates for group hospitalization in a few cities. The personal care index rise reflected wide-spread advances in prices of toilet soap.

Substantial reductions in prices of television sets were almost offset by higher motion picture theatre admission charges.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - OCTOBER 1954

Consumer prices in American cities decreased 0.2 percent between September and October 1954, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Consumer Price Index for October 1954 was 114.5 (1947-49=100), 0.8 percent lower than the all-time peak reached in October 1953.

The October figure marked the third successive month of decline for the overall index, but major index components showed varying movements. Apparel prices, which reached their post-Korean high in September 1951, were the first to start down, although a slight rise was noted in October. The food price trend has been down generally since the Fall of 1952, although some seasonal increases have occurred from month to month. Transportation prices and costs for reading and recreation were lower than in October a year ago. Other elements of living costs, notably rent and medical care, have continued to advance slowly.

Food prices, off 0.5 percent from the preceding month, were primarily responsible for the 0.2 percent decline from the September 1954 index level. Transportation and housefurnishings costs went down over the month, but apparel, reading and recreation, coal and fuel oils, gas and electricity, medical care, and residential rents showed fractional advances.

FOOD The October food index was 111.8 (1947-49=100), 1.6 percent lower than a year ago, 4.1 percent below the record high of August 1952, but 11.2 percent above the June 1950 level. Prices were lower in almost all of the 46 cities priced, with 11 cities showing decreases of more than 1 percent. The most important contributing influence was the plentiful supply of pork and poultry throughout the country. The index for meats, poultry, and fish decreased in all 46 index cities and amounted to more than 2 percent in about three-fourths of them.

Pork prices dropped in every city, mostly by 3 to 7 percent, reaching the lowest levels for this year. Pork chops were down 7 cents per pound; ham, 3 cents; bacon, over 1 cent. The price decreases for poultry were larger than for pork. Frying chickens were selling at 40.5 cents per pound on the average, compared to 46.8 cents in October last year.

Prices of fresh fruits were somewhat lower and fresh vegetables considerably higher, on the average, than in September, resulting in a net increase of nearly 1 percent for fresh produce combined. Apple prices, which were responsible for the decrease in fresh fruits, dropped in all but 7 cities, reflecting bumper crops. In New England cities, apple prices rose substantially, probably due to damage to local apple crops by the hurricanes.

Advances for lettuce, tomatoes, and green beans outweighed seasonal decreases for potatoes. Prices of lettuce rose in most cities by 20 percent or more. Price changes for tomatoes varied from decreases in several cities to increases of over 100 percent in 3 others.

Coffee prices showed a further slight decline of $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent, but were still 20 percent higher than at the end of 1953.

Prices of fresh milk continued the seasonal increase begun in July, and there were small increases in butter prices in all 46 cities in the index.

HOUSING The housing index, which includes rent, fuels, utilities, household furnishings, and household operation, remained at 119.5, the level of a month ago. Prices were lower for electrical appliances, household textiles, and some articles of furniture, but increases were reported for gas, coal, and fuel oil. Rents also rose 0.2 percent on the average during October and are now 1.7 percent higher than a year earlier. However, scattered rent decreases were reported.

The large decrease in prices for some household equipment, such as refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, toasters, and stoves, resulted from efforts by major department and other long-established types of retail stores to meet competition of discount houses. In addition to the introduction of lower price lines by manufacturers, intended to permit retailers to quote lower prices, dealers mentioned competitive markdowns and numerous sales as typical of their efforts to meet competition.

OTHER COMMODITIES AND SERVICES Apparel prices showed a further slight rise in October. Higher prices were reported for women's and girls' fall and winter apparel in cities in which these articles were priced in October for the first time this season.

Men's work clothing and sport shirt prices again went down, reflecting the effect at the retail level of lower mill prices earlier this year. Lower hosiery and lingerie prices were attributed to large production in these lines.

The decline of 1.1 percent in transportation costs reflected further concessions by new car dealers, preparatory to introduction of 1955 models. Prices of used cars, tires, gasoline, and auto repairs also declined in a number of cities during October.

Reading and recreation costs rose, as movie admission charges and newspaper prices increased in a few cities.

The slight rise in medical care costs resulted from scattered increases in prices of drugs and medicines, fees for services of physicians and surgeons, and hospital charges.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - NOVEMBER 1954

Consumer prices in American cities averaged 0.1 percent higher in November than in October 1954, after declining in the preceding three months, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Higher new car prices for 1955 models were an important factor in this increase, as former liberal price concessions on 1954 models were discontinued by dealers. Rent, fuel, medical care, personal care, and household operation costs also advanced over the month. Declines occurred in prices of food, housefurnishings, and reading and recreation. Apparel prices were unchanged on the average.

The Consumer Price Index for November 1954 was 114.6 (1947-49 = 100), 0.3 percent less than November 1953, but 12.6 percent higher than June 1950. Since June 1953, the index has exhibited marked stability, varying between 114.5 and 115.4 percent of the 1947-49 average.

FOOD Retail food prices fell 0.6 percent between mid-October and mid-November 1954, continuing the decline which began last August. The food index in November was 111.1 (1947-49 = 100), its lowest point since January 1951, with meats, poultry, and fish prices down to pre-Korea levels. Food costs averaged lower in 41 of the 46 cities surveyed. Price decreases for oranges, coffee, bacon, and eggs contributed most substantially to the reduction from the October food index level.

Orange prices declined nearly 24 percent on the average, and more than 40 percent in some cities, as supplies of Florida and California oranges became more plentiful. Canned and frozen orange juice prices also were lower in most cities. In response to seasonal changes in supply, lettuce prices decreased, while prices of tomatoes were up more than 25 percent and green beans advanced over 30 percent.

Coffee prices fell 4.5 percent further over the month as all 46 cities reported decreases. At an average price of \$1.05 per pound in November, coffee prices were about 15 percent below the record high of last August. Egg prices fell 2.7 percent between October and November, and are now about 20 percent below the levels of one year ago, reflecting the continued effect of the record 1954 production. Most fats and oils - margarine, lard, vegetable shortening, and salad dressing - declined between 1 and 4 percent in price as the result of large supplies of raw materials.

Pork prices continued their seasonal downward movement of recent months, with bacon lower in all cities (down 5 percent on the average). Prices of choice grades of beef cuts priced for the index increased for the third consecutive month, reflecting strength in primary markets. Poultry prices recovered somewhat from the low level of the previous month.

Bread prices were raised in a number of cities to cover higher costs and there were some further seasonal increases for milk, but competitive price reductions were reported in several areas for both of these important foods.

HOUSING The housing index remained at the same level for the third successive month. Rents again increased fractionally (0.2 percent) over the month although some decreases were reported, especially in the smaller cities. The rent index has risen 1.3 percent in the first 11 months of 1954 compared with 5.5 percent in the first 11 months of 1953. Monthly gas and electric bills, and coal and fuel oil prices were higher in a number of cities. Household operation costs moved upward slightly with scattered increases in laundry, dry cleaning, and ice prices.

Housefurnishings continued their downward trend as lower retail prices were reported for refrigerators, stoves, vacuum cleaners, and toasters. Some of the lower prices resulted from retailers taking mark-downs to meet the competition from discount houses; others reflected in part reduced prices from manufacturers to dealers. In addition, some sale prices on current models were reported in anticipation of the introduction of the 1955 lines. Two large appliance manufacturers discontinued their policy of suggesting retail selling prices for many items, permitting distributors to establish retail prices based on local conditions. Textile housefurnishings were generally higher as dealers restored original prices following sales.

OTHER COMMODITIES AND SERVICES The transportation index rise of 2.1 percent was the primary influence in reversing the recent downward trend of the Consumer Price Index. New 1955 automobiles came on the market at slightly higher list prices, but the bulk of the increased cost to consumers resulted from dealers generally discontinuing or reducing price concessions such as were given during the last few months on 1954 models. Increased tire prices and auto maintenance costs also were reported, but used car prices declined.

The apparel index was unchanged following the usual seasonal rise during the earlier months of the Fall. New lower price lines on many articles of women's apparel replaced previously stocked items. In men's and boys' apparel, jackets and work clothing were lower and tailored clothing higher in some cities. Men's rubbers were higher in price in most of the cities surveyed in November, as manufacturers' prices advanced, following higher raw material costs and recent wage increases.

Personal care costs averaged 0.4 percent higher as scattered increases were reported in the prices of some toilet goods and fees for barber and beauty shop services.

Higher hospital rates in four cities and increases in physicians' fees in several cities, because of higher overhead costs, caused a further advance (0.2 percent) in the medical care index.

Reading and recreation costs declined 0.1 percent, as new model television sets at lower prices were substituted for older models in many stores.

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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Washington 25, D. C.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX - DECEMBER 1954

Consumer prices in urban areas declined 0.3 percent on the average in December, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most of the decrease was due to lower food prices, although prices were also lower for transportation, apparel, reading and recreation, personal care, and the "other goods and services" category. Fuel, residential rent, and medical care costs were higher.

The Consumer Price Index for December 1954 was 114.3 (1947-49 = 100), 0.5 percent lower than a year ago, and 1.0 percent below the record high level of October 1953.

FOOD Retail food prices declined 0.6 percent between mid-November and mid-December 1954, the fifth consecutive monthly decrease. Since July, average food prices have dropped 3.7 percent, with monthly decreases ranging from 0.5 percent to 1.3 percent.

Major influences contributing to the food decline were substantially lower prices for eggs, pork chops, chickens, lettuce, and oranges. Egg prices were down seasonally (about 8 percent) as reductions were reported in 43 of the 46 cities in the index. At an average price of 53.6 cents a dozen, eggs in December were 23 percent lower than in December 1953, and were selling at the lowest prices for any December since 1941. Usually egg prices reach their lowest level in early spring, rising to a peak in October or November, but with production at a record rate, prices this year have not exhibited their usual seasonal movement. Prices of pork chops declined 5 percent between November and December, but ham prices rose slightly. At the end of the year pork prices were about 8 percent below December 1953. Prices of frying chickens declined 3½ percent during the month, as supplies continued at record levels. Other meats for which lower prices prevailed in December were frankfurters, chuck roast, and leg of lamb.

Oranges averaged 8 percent lower in price than in November and canned orange juice prices declined 1½ percent, reflecting higher than average production. Bananas declined 3½ percent during the month, but apple prices were 3 percent higher than in November. Lettuce prices dropped 17 percent, as lower prices were reported in 41 of the 46 cities, with reductions ranging up to 46 percent. Prices of green beans also were 13 percent lower than in November. These declines were nearly counterbalanced by higher prices for tomatoes (up 17 percent), cabbage (up 19 percent), and sweetpotatoes (up 8½ percent). Tea prices rose for the ninth consecutive month to a level about 9 percent above December 1953. Coffee prices edged up (0.2 percent), with increases reported in 24 cities.

HOUSING After three months at the same level, the housing costs index rose 0.2 percent between November and December as a result of higher prices for fuel oil and coal and continued increases in residential rents. Higher rates for gas and other public utilities were reported in several cities. Prices of housefurnishings averaged unchanged from November. Some decreases in electrical appliances and furniture were reported in a number of cities. Household operation costs declined 0.1 percent, primarily because of decreases in laundry soap and detergent prices.

OTHER COMMODITIES AND SERVICES The transportation index declined 0.2 percent, primarily because of substantial decreases in used car prices, following introduction of the 1955 model automobiles. New car prices were higher than in November, as more 1955 models were on the market.

The apparel price decline in December is due principally to the end-of-season sale prices for women's and girls' coats and women's wool suits reported in practically all cities.

Prices were lower for television sets and radios, and movie admissions declined with the return to regular prices after showings of special features in a number of cities.

Medical care costs continued their slow advance as higher fees were reported in December by physicians and dentists. Hospitals in 7 cities quoted higher ward and room rates because of higher expenses. The personal care and "other goods and services" groups each declined slightly.

YEAR-END SUMMARY During 1954 the Consumer Price Index moved within the very narrow range between 114.3 and 115.2. The greatest month-to-month change in the average of all goods and services prices was 0.3 percent. From 115.2 in January, the index moved downward slowly for 3 months to 114.6. It turned up in May and by July had regained its January level. Since July the price index has edged down steadily, except for a 0.1 percent rise in November. Beginning in September, the index has been lower each month than for the corresponding month of the previous year.

Most of the change during the year was due to decreasing food prices. The total food index was down 1.7 percent and food at home was down 2.2 percent. All subgroups of food at home, except cereals and bakery products, reflected lower prices than a year ago. The December 1954 prices of meats, poultry, and fish averaged more than 5 percent below December 1953, primarily because of larger 1954 production of pork and poultry. Dairy products were down 3.2 percent, reflecting chiefly the reduction in Government support prices. During most of the first eight months of the year, prices of other groups of foods rose, largely because of higher coffee prices, but declined slightly in the last four months of the year as coffee prices fell and egg prices went down. Prices of restaurant meals advanced during the year.

The advance of 0.7 percent in the overall prices of housing in 1954 resulted largely from steadily increasing residential rents, which rose 1.4 percent. This compares with a 5.7 percent increase during 1953, indicating that rents are levelling off for the first time since mid-1947 when Federal rent controls were first relaxed. During this period, in which Federal, State, and local controls gradually were lifted, rents advanced 37.8 percent. In 1954, rent decreases began to appear more frequently, particularly in smaller cities, and more recently in a few large cities. The average costs of gas and electricity, solid fuels and fuel oil, and household operation also were higher than in December 1953. Housefurnishings prices dropped 2.5 percent during the year as retailers generally reduced prices of electrical appliances to meet competition from discount houses, and reductions in Federal excise taxes largely were passed on to consumers.

Apparel prices moved generally downward in 1954. The net decrease over the year was 0.9 percent. Women's and girls' apparel prices were down 1.5 percent from December 1953 and men's and boys', 1.0 percent, but footwear and other apparel prices were slightly higher than a year ago.

Transportation costs declined 1.2 percent from December 1953 to December 1954, as used car prices decreased steadily, and prices of tires also were lower. New car prices rose slightly.

The medical care index, which reflects the general continued increases in prices of services, rose in every month in 1954 except June, to the end of the year, when it was 2.2 percent higher than in December 1953. Personal care costs were unchanged on the average from last year, as higher prices for barber and beauty shop services were counterbalanced by reduced excise taxes on cosmetics.

The decline of 2.1 percent for reading and recreation resulted from lower prices for television sets, radios, toys, and sporting goods. "Other goods and services" prices fell 0.3 percent during the year.