

APPENDIX

FOMC BRIEFING - P.R. FISHER

JULY 5-6, 1995

Mr. Chairman:

Since your last meeting, there has been more volatility in short-term interest rates and less volatility in the dollar than were experienced during the previous months of the year. These somewhat different price movements both appear to reflect decreased risk appetites, and increased uncertainty, on the part of market participants.

Within the continued trend toward lower rates, the back-and-forth movements in June -- particularly in short-term rates and interest rate futures -- reflected the shifting implications of data releases and the alternating interpretations of comments by Committee members. With increasing uncertainty about both the direction of the economy and the likely course of the Committee's policy, market participants have traded the interest rate markets with increasing anxiety and decreasing conviction. The market's skittishness was most recently reflected in the abrupt back-up in rates following the release of new homes sales.

Because of the market's skittishness, I am reluctant to put too fine a point on what has or has not been priced into the market. While current prices of Fed Funds futures and Euro-dollar futures contracts are consistent with a 25 basis point

ease by the end of the month and a greater than 50 percent probability of such a move at this meeting, I would caution against extracting such point estimate of market expectations. Indeed, I think that the 14 basis points of easing now in the July Fed Funds futures contract reflects a clearing price between a wide majority of market participants who do not, in fact, expect an ease at this meeting and a small number who have convinced themselves that the Committee will announce an ease in policy tomorrow.

With somewhat different consequences, the same lack of conviction is present in exchange markets. Following the concerted intervention on May 31st, the dollar traded uneventfully in narrow ranges against the mark and the yen, albeit gradually declining within those ranges.

Many market participants see the dollar as undervalued, and can find little to justify a further decline. But they also cannot see what will cause the dollar to appreciate. While the German and European economies appear to be slowing, and the Japanese economy and financial system appear to be in a dismal state, uncertainty about the U.S. economy makes it hard to see much upside for the dollar. In the short-run, day-by-day market participants see continued higher yields in European bonds and persistent dollar selling by Japanese exporters and Asian and European central banks as capping the dollar's upward potential

and defining the upper end of the dollar ranges around 1.42 marks and 86 yen.

Last week the dollar experienced some choppiness and closed toward the lower end of its ranges, just above 1.38 marks and around 84 and a half yen. As a result of higher-than-expected preliminary German CPI for June, the market saw a decreasing likelihood of a Bundesbank rate reduction. The dollar moved up, following the announced resolution of the auto-trade dispute and then moved down after the Bundesbank's announced decision to leave rates unchanged and the new homes sales data. In my view, this back-and-forth of the dollar last week principally reflected the thinness of the market and the lack of conviction on the part of market participants.

In foreign operations, as I mentioned, the Desk sold 1 billion dollars worth of marks and yen on May 31st, evenly divided between the System and the ESF -- so for the System, we sold 250 million dollars worth of both marks and yen. This operation was undertaken at the initiative of the Treasury for the purpose of underscoring the April G-7 communique which sought an "orderly reversal" of recent exchange rate movements. With our support and that of the Bundesbank, the other G-10 central banks agreed to join the operation, which clearly surprised the market and helped to stabilize the dollar in the run up to the Halifax summit.

For value today, the Mexican authorities have drawn 2.5 billion dollars on the Treasury's Medium-Term facility. This brings to 10.5 billion dollars the total outstanding on the Medium-Term facility, with 1 billion dollars also outstanding on both the Treasury's and the System's short-term swaps. On August 1st, when the short-term swaps next mature, we expect to undertake the second of the agreed-three rollovers of the System's swap.

In domestic operations, actual reserve needs in the period were quite different from our initial forecast of a consistently growing and large reserve need. Demand for currency turned out to be much weaker than forecast and the generally-expected higher Treasury balances were more concentrated than anticipated. As a result, after an initial 4 and a half billion dollar bill pass on May 31st, temporary operations were adequate and effective in meeting the remaining need.

Looking forward, the combination of the weaker-than-expected demand for currency and the Treasury's monetization of 2.5 billion dollars of SDRs to fund the Mexican drawing, puts us in the posture of expecting to be draining reserves by the end of July.

Mr. Chairman, I will need separate votes of the Committee to ratify the Desk's foreign and domestic operations and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Michael J. Prell
July 5, 1995

CHART SHOW PRESENTATION

We're going to employ the tag-team approach this afternoon. I'll commence the presentation with a brief overview of the staff's economic projection. Then, my colleagues, Tom Simpson, Larry Slifman, and Karen Johnson, will address some issues that we thought might be of particular interest to the Committee. I'll wrap up by unveiling the forecasts you submitted for inclusion in the Board's Humphrey-Hawkins report.

Chart 1 starts things off by summarizing some of the key things we know about where the economy has been recently. As we noted in the Greenbook, while there's a consensus among analysts that activity slowed a lot during the second quarter, not everyone has marked GDP growth down as low as the minus one-half percent we've estimated. The data for the period are still far from complete, so we could not argue vigorously for our less optimistic view. Be that as it may, what ultimately swayed us in our assessment was the softness in labor market indicators--most notably the drop in production worker hours through May, at the left. Although initial claims for jobless benefits, shown at the right, have not risen to a level that we would think consistent with outright declines in employment, we hesitated to discount the reported slide in hours any more heavily than we did.

The remaining four panels highlight the sectors of expenditure for which we have two months of data. As you can see at the middle left, real consumer spending rose smartly in May. However, given the weak start in April, it would take another large gain in June to produce more than a mediocre quarterly

average increase. And, though the May burst of new home sales, shown at the right, bodes well for future building activity, the descent of single-family starts into the spring months guarantees that residential construction will contribute a hefty negative in second-quarter GDP. In the lower left panel, new orders for nondefense capital goods have been very choppy of late; and, while shipments are up substantially, other data on aircraft and motor vehicles suggest that the second-quarter gain in overall equipment spending may be less than half that recorded in the first quarter. Finally, at the right, nonresidential construction fell off in the latest month and appears likely to record a less than spectacular quarterly rise. Unfortunately, we have only one month's full data for the volatile inventory and net export components of GDP, so there's plenty of room for surprise in the second-quarter GDP picture. Thus, I would emphasize, again, the tentativeness of our current estimate.

Turning now to the outlook for coming quarters, Chart 2 summarizes the monetary and fiscal features of our forecast. As you know, we based our forecast on the arbitrary assumption that the federal funds rate will be held at 6 percent into early 1996; we assumed that it would then drift down a half percentage point, given the slowing of inflation we expect to occur in the period ahead and an allowance for effects of ongoing fiscal restraint on the trend of the "natural" real rate of interest in the economy.

In long-term markets, we've predicted that the assumed failure of the Fed to ease and incoming evidence of a pickup in activity will push bond yields appreciably higher by year-end-- and that there will be only a partial reversal of that back-up during 1996.

We believe that the economy has received a boost over the past couple of years from a swing toward easier credit availability and more lenient loan terms; we are anticipating that lenders will become more cautious in coming quarters, but only mildly so.

Meanwhile, apart from a slight firming in the near term in response to the projected rise in bond yields, we anticipate that the foreign exchange value of the dollar will be little changed through 1996.

One factor that obviously could play a role in shaping developments with respect to interest and exchange rates is fiscal policy. The outlook for the federal budget is highly uncertain. We share the oft-expressed sentiment that the prospects for deficit slashing seem greater now than they did a few months ago. However, we don't think it will be at all easy to convert the congressional budget resolution into specific bills that the President will sign or that have will such broad support as to be veto-proof. In the end, it seems likely that, if there is to be a budget, there will have to some serious compromising. As you can see in the bottom panel, our assumed fiscal '96 and '97 deficit reductions of \$30 and \$25 billion, are smaller than those contained in the budget resolution--at least before the Congress tacks on any tax cuts, which have yet to be spelled out. On the other hand, our deficit reduction is much more sizable than that recommended by President Clinton. We've anticipated that cuts in purchases will be modest, and that it will be transfers and grants that provide the bulk of the deficit-reduction. We've included a tax cut, in the form of a credit for children.

Chart 3 describes, in broad terms, how we think the economy will evolve against this backdrop. GDP growth, the red line in the top panel, outstripped final sales last year, as inventory investment shot up. As expected, that pattern seems to be reversing this year.

The GDP growth rates of 1-3/4 percent in 1995 and 2-1/4 percent in 1996 are both below what we've assumed to be the trend rate of expansion of potential output, which is about 2-1/2 percent. Consequently, pressures on resources should diminish. As the middle panels indicate, we are projecting that the unemployment rate will inch back above 6 percent, while the rate of factory use is expected to drop to below its longer-term average of 81.3 percent.

With this decline in resource utilization, consumer price inflation should ease back after the bulge earlier this year. We expect that both the overall and core CPIs will be edging south of 3 percent again by 1996.

Chart 4 sketches out the projected movements of the major components of GDP. I perhaps should note that we haven't updated these graphs to reflect the revisions in the first-quarter GDP data released last Friday, but those changes were small. As you can see in the upper-left panel, we believe that inventory investment probably slowed in the second quarter and will slow further in the third. By the end of the summer, stocks should be in reasonable alignment with sales, and the resumption of moderate accumulation will contribute to an acceleration of GDP in the fourth quarter.

This all hinges, of course, on the vitality of final demand. One key ingredient here is the response of housing to

the large decline that has occurred in mortgage rates. Even discounting last week's figure on new home sales considerably, the prospects appear good for achieving at least the upturn in residential investment that is graphed at the right.

With an improvement in the housing sector, we would expect demand for furnishings and appliances to firm. But, as you can see in the middle-left panel, the trend of disposable income growth is now slowing, in line with the weaker pace of hiring, and so we're looking for only a limited rebound in the growth of personal consumption expenditures in coming quarters.

We expect that there will be a further deceleration of business fixed investment over the second half of this year--one that is most marked for producers' durables--the red bars--but that also encompasses nonresidential structures. A moderate step-up in equipment spending is forecast for next year, as firms respond, with the usual lags, to the firming in product demand and the lower level of capital costs.

Government purchases will be sluggish, under our fiscal assumptions. Not only will the deficit-reduction effort push federal purchases down at a faster rate, but the reduction in grants will intensify the pressures on states and localities to trim the growth of their outlays for goods and services.

Finally, a strengthening of foreign growth should combine with the depreciation of the dollar we have already seen to produce a more rapid expansion of exports over the forecast period. With imports also being sucked into the U.S. at a substantial clip, though, net exports will rise only marginally. Still, this will be a far more favorable contribution to GDP than the sizable negatives that we've seen over the past few years.

I've obviously given only a broad-brush treatment to our projection--and much of that admittedly repeats what you've read in the Greenbook. My colleagues now will attempt to add some value in this presentation. Tom will start by fleshing out some of our thoughts on the financial setting for the economy; Larry will focus on some of the more interesting questions relating to the outlook for private spending and for inflation; and Karen will address some issues pertaining to the prospects for the dollar and for the economies of some of our key trading partners.

Thomas D. Simpson
July 5, 1995

In my comments on the financial setting for the staff economic forecast, I will focus on: developments on the credit availability front; the healthy gains in stock prices thus far in 1995 and whether this represents formation of a "bubble;" and the level of real interest rates as we enter a period of greater fiscal restraint.

Charts 5 and 6 address credit availability. The upper panel of chart 5 shows that bank capital positions remain quite comfortable by the standards of recent decades, having climbed a good bit from the period of asset quality concerns of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the context of stronger capital positions, banks have become willing lenders. Indeed, the center panel shows that the margin of banks more willing to make business and consumer loans has remained sizable over the first half of this year. In the case of business loans, this greater willingness seems to importantly reflect a relaxation of the very stringent standards imposed several years ago, an observation generally confirmed by examiners.

Consistent with the willing posture of loan officers, spreads on business loans, represented by the red line in the bottom panel for small business loans, have been on a mild downtrend over the past couple years. Auto loan spreads have widened some in recent months but from unusually low levels, as auto loan rates have in fairly typical fashion lagged market rate declines, and they remain below levels of the early 1990s.

Spreads on open market business debt, shown at the top of your next chart, have risen some of late as the bond market

has absorbed larger volumes while the paper market perhaps has been affected by some quarter-end pressures. On balance, though, they remain fairly tight.

Meanwhile, the dramatic improvement in credit quality in the consumer and business sectors seems to have come to an end. The red line in the middle panel shows that consumer loan delinquencies appear to be turning up from very low levels, in keeping with the recent upturn in debt-service burdens, the black line. Looking forward, the staff forecast implies that household debt-service burdens rise further, as shown by the broken line, and thus it seems reasonable to expect further increases in delinquencies.

The bottom panel shows net interest payments of nonfinancial corporations in relation to cash flow, along with the delinquency rate on business loans. Interest payments began rising last year but remain relatively low and, in the staff forecast, they edge down after midyear. Accordingly, while the delinquency rate on business loans likely will move higher in coming quarters, the increase should prove modest.

On net, these considerations suggest that lenders will be turning more cautious and credit will become less available. However, should income and interest rates unfold in line with the staff forecast, any such move to stringency will be mild, exerting only a slight drag on spending.

The tremendous run-up in stock prices this year to even higher records has raised concern about whether a "bubble" might be developing in this market and whether an easing of policy at this time might foster further speculative behavior. Chart 7 illustrates that share prices have risen about 17 percent over

the first half of this year, a period in which analysts have generally been surprised on the upside by earnings reports. Spikes of that magnitude typically have not persisted for long, although they typically have not been reversed immediately and they have not been harbingers of recession. The center panel shows that economic profits, despite some leveling out of late, were up nearly 25 percent in the first quarter from two years earlier, and the broken line shows that the staff forecast looks for a resumption of profits growth later this year.

In the bottom panel, the red line charts the S&P dividend price ratio and shows that the current dividend yield is very low historically. Moreover, real bond rates, which I will be discussing shortly, may be a little on the high side of historical norms, despite sizable declines over recent months, a factor that might call for higher dividend yields. However, dividend pay-outs for these firms have been extremely low, as an unusually large number of corporations have favored retained earnings to finance fixed investment or to buy back shares when it was thought that the potential returns on internal investments were inadequate. Indeed, as the black line illustrates, the earnings-price ratio, using earnings measured on a trailing basis, has been rising this year, and its level is not particularly low--that is, the P-E ratio is not particularly high.

On balance, there are no strong reasons to believe that, in the context of the staff economic forecast, recent gains in stock prices are unsustainable. However, the risks in the near term may be greater on the downside, especially since analysts appear to be more optimistic than the staff about the

outlook for profits, and we have interest rates going up, which does not appear to be built into the market.

Turning to real interest rates, the upper panel of chart 8 plots measures of the real rate on federal funds and the key ten-year Treasury note since 1960. By the standards of this long period, the current 3 percent real federal funds rate is a bit on the high side of historical experience. The longer-term real rate has fallen a good bit this year but it, too, remains above longer historical averages. By the standards of the past decade and a half, though, both real short and long rates are moderate. In any event, judging whether real interest rates are restrictive or not at any point in time depends importantly on other forces acting on the economy, such as private propensities to spend, exchange rates and foreign output, and fiscal policy.

Of particular interest at the present time are impending deficit-cutting measures as both the Congress and the President have embraced proposals that they claim will result in a balanced budget. The middle panel puts the deficit scaled by GDP in historical perspective. Even though the deficit is down appreciably from the swollen levels that characterized much of the 1980s and early 1990s, it is still large by historical standards. As shown in the inset to the left, absent bold fiscal action, the deficit would tend to widen some in the years immediately ahead, as shown by the red line labeled "baseline" which is based on the CBO's "current law" baseline. In contrast, the blank line labeled "balanced budget" is a staff translation of Congress's recent budget resolution geared to budget balance in the year 2002.

One way to assess this and other developments bearing on equilibrium real interest rates is through an econometric model like the staff's. Such an exercise is shown in the bottom panel. In essence, the experiment performed involves selecting the real federal funds rate path that results in output moving in line with potential and stable inflation. A word of caution at this point is that exercises of this sort should be regarded as illustrative and not read too literally: Apart from all the uncertainties about behavioral relations in the model, the particular results depend on various assumptions.

The red line, labeled "baseline," corresponds to the baseline deficit shown in the center panel and should not be confused with baseline strategies shown in the Greenbook and Bluebook. Under this baseline, the real federal funds rate would remain in the 3 percent area, buoyed by continued large fiscal deficits. The solid black line illustrates the path of the federal funds rate required under the balanced budget scenario, based on the assumption that the bond rate, which plays a critical role in this model, responds primarily to current and past levels of short-term rates--that is, the process determining the bond rate is adaptive or backward looking. In these circumstances, the funds rate would need to drop promptly, given lags, by about 3/4 percentage point or so to avoid a weaker economy once spending cuts begin to kick in later this year. This new lower level would need to be held for a couple years before it would have to drift down about another 1/2 percentage point to counter the mounting drag from ongoing deficit reduction.

Of course, the bond market might be more forward looking. Indeed, it has already built in some deficit reduction, a factor that has contributed to the bond market rally over recent months. This will act to cushion the depressing effects on the economy of impending budget cuts. The broken black line illustrates the path that the real federal funds rate would need to take, in the eyes of this model, if the move to a balanced budget were fully credible to market participants and current bond rates accurately reflected the future path of the federal funds rate needed to achieve the same outcome as in the other two simulations. In these circumstances, no reduction in the real federal funds rate would be necessary for some time, until the turn of the century, as prompt, forward-looking bond rate declines provide sufficient stimulus to rate-sensitive sectors to offset weakness coming from fiscal restraint. Eventually, the real funds rate would need to decline, converging toward the level in the adaptive expectations case and validating expectations.

Clearly, both the backward-looking and fully forward-looking paths represent extremes. In any event, the somewhat forward-looking nature of the bond market implies that recent rate declines are, to a degree, reducing the need for aggressive policy measures in the quarters ahead.

Lawrence Slifman
July 5, 1995

Your next chart focuses on the current inventory correction. To give you the bottom line of our analysis first, we do not think inventory overhangs are widespread; primarily they are confined to autos and some suppliers such as steel, housing-related items, and apparel. Producers in these sectors have been prompt to cut output, and with demand showing signs of firming, we think the process pretty much should have run its course by the end of the third quarter.

Turning to the specifics, the upper left panel shows the sharp run-up in dealer inventories year earlier this year. As you know, automakers responded by slashing production in the second quarter. Sales picked up in May--bolstered at least in part by manufacturers' incentives-- and if, as we expect, they climb a bit further during the summer, the current level of production should bring stocks close to the 60-day industry norm by September.

Outside of motor vehicles, significant inventory overhangs appear to be limited to only a few sectors of the economy. I use the phrase "appear to be", in part, because monthly inventory data are subject to sizable revisions that sometimes can substantially alter analytical conclusions. That said, the data--shown in the middle panel--and anecdotal reports suggest that stocks are most out of kilter in areas related to the softness in the housing market: construction supplies, and home goods such as appliances and furniture. In addition, apparel inventories are reported to be excessive. The stock-sales ratio for these market groups is shown by the red line.

Elsewhere, as shown by the black line, stocks in the aggregate have edged up much less relative to sales. The lower left panel illustrates that manufacturers of construction supplies, home goods, and apparel responded promptly to the recent inventory accumulation, and have cut production nearly 4 percent since January. We expect that the inventory correction in these sectors will be completed during the next few months through a combination of some further production adjustments and a strengthening of demand. One tentative sign of that strengthening was the May rise in new orders received by these manufacturers--the lower right panel.

As Mike noted, in our forecast, a critical element in containing the size and scope of the current inventory adjustment is a projected firming in consumer demand--the subject of your next chart. In making this projection, we first had to ask ourselves why PCE has been so sluggish in recent months. We noted in the Greenbook a variety of possibilities. Among them, the exhaustion of pent up demand doubtless has played an important role.

As shown in the upper left panel of chart 10, during 1992, 93, and 94, real outlays for consumer goods grew rapidly: indeed, at nearly twice their longer-run average pace. It is probably the case that the slowing of spending during the first half of this year reflected, at least in part, the typical consumer "breather" that often follows a period of rapid spending to above trend levels. If this analysis is correct, we should begin to see a pick up, albeit limited, in consumer spending.

For motor vehicles, the average age of the nation's auto fleet, shown in the upper right panel, has been trending up

and now is at its highest level since the late 1940s. In light of the aging of the stock, we expect replacement demand to continue to boost sales over the next year and a half. In addition, if housing activity picks up as we are projecting, consumer spending for furniture and appliances also should strengthen.

In the Greenbook we noted that several of the fundamental determinants of consumption activity are still at favorable levels. Among them is unemployment expectations, the black line in the middle panel, which statistically seems to be a useful indicator of consumers' willingness to purchase autos and other durable goods. Given our forecast of sustained growth and only a small rise in the jobless rate over the next year and a half, we don't expect much deterioration in these expectations, which suggests that spending should hold up well as a share of income. In addition, the recent stock market rally has added several hundred billion dollars to household net worth, the black line in the bottom panel, reversing much of the previous dip. Over the long run, net worth and saving are inversely related, as theory would predict, although in the short run the relationship is much less tight. Nonetheless, last years' flat stock market and declining bond prices may have been a damping influence on consumption during the first half of this year, while in the projection, we see the recent rise in securities prices pushing the saving rate a bit lower than it otherwise would be.

Another important issue in the forecast is how much longer the boom in equipment spending can be sustained--your next chart. We expect real outlays for producers' durable equipment to grow at more than a 5 percent annual rate over the next year

and a half. Coming on top of the double-digit growth rates for equipment spending during the past three years, one would think the current investment boom should be off the charts compared with previous cyclical expansions, and that a major contraction may be imminent. But, as shown in the upper panel, using a quantity index that is less distorted by the relative decline in computer prices over time, the current cycle is well within the range of previous long-expansion experience.

One problem with this cyclical comparison is that, over the years, equipment investment has switched toward capital goods that depreciate more rapidly, such as computers and communications equipment. Because of the higher depreciation rate, firms have to "run faster" just to stay in place. To adjust for this, the middle panels look at net investment relative to the net capital stock--that is, the growth rate of the net capital stock. Because of the dramatically different investment rates for computers and other PDE, they are shown separately. In both cases, the capital stock is growing rapidly, but not out of bounds by historical standards.

One negative factor in the outlook for equipment spending is our projected decline in capacity utilization--the lower left panel. Clearly, if firms find that they have too much idle equipment, they will re-think their plans to replace or upgrade, let alone expand, existing capacity. This has led us to keep the level of spending for equipment other than computers essentially flat over the projection period. In contrast, the cost of capital relative to the cost of labor--the lower right panel--continues to fall rapidly, primarily reflecting further declines in computer prices. On balance, we expect investment in

computing equipment should remain on a rising trend, although slower than its recent torrid pace, keeping overall PDE growing at a respectable rate.

Your next chart examines our inflation forecast in greater detail. Basically, the issue is: why, in contrast to many outside forecasts, do we think inflation is likely to subside from the 3-1/2 percent rate observed so far this year, to a shade under 3 percent next year? In part the acceleration of consumer prices in the opening months of this year has reflected higher materials costs and rising non-oil import prices--the middle panels. Some additional pass-through may still be in the pipeline. But we expect those effects to wane soon. The PPI for intermediate materials excluding food and energy rose only 0.2 percent in May and, with manufacturing activity contracting, spot prices for many industrial commodities have stabilized or even fallen recently. Moreover, the dollar is expected to be little changed during the projection period, and this should keep import price increases in check, following the recent surge.

Labor cost trends have been quite favorable recently. Over the four quarters ending in March, productivity in the nonfarm business sector increased 2 percent while hourly compensation was up only 3 percent. As shown in the lower panel, much of the moderation in compensation over the past two years has come from a pronounced slowing in benefit costs--much of it related to health care costs. Health insurance premiums rose only 1-1/2 percent over the past year, while the costs for workers' compensation plans, which are partly related to medical inflation, actually fell. In addition, employer pension contributions slowed abruptly in the first quarter. Some of

these improvements in benefit-cost inflation reflect one-time savings and we expect some bounce-back in the growth of benefits next year. In addition, with resource utilization rates expected to remain fairly high, we are projecting some upward pressure on the growth of wages and salaries.

On balance, we are forecasting hourly compensation to rise at a 3-1/4 percent rate through the end of next year--only a quarter of a percentage point faster than during the past year.

Karen will now continue our presentation.

Karen Johnson
July 5, 1995

As Mike has explained, I will consider issues underlying our thinking on the dollar and some elements in our outlook for key U.S. trading partners.

Chart 13 shows recent developments in dollar exchange rates. In terms of the currencies of the other G-10 countries, the dollar has generally been declining during the first half of this year in both nominal terms, not shown, and price-adjusted terms, the red line in the top panel--continuing a longer trend of dollar depreciation that began in early 1994. Economic developments during much of 1995 have worked to lower jointly the real long-term interest differential, the black line, and the price-adjusted value of the dollar. With respect to the individual G-10 currencies--the lower left panel--movements of the dollar to date this year have differed substantially, reflecting the differing factors that lie behind the changes in bilateral dollar rates. For example, the persistent trade dispute between Japan and the United States--and their respective trade imbalances--weighed on the yen/dollar rate, and it is against the yen that the dollar has depreciated most--15 percent--since December. Of the European G-10 currencies, the dollar has fallen least against the Italian lira and the British pound. The dollar fluctuated in terms of the Canadian currency during the past half year, often moving in the opposite direction from its change with respect to the other G-10 currencies, but on balance, there is now little change from December in the bilateral Canadian dollar rate.

In contrast to its movement against G-10 currencies, the dollar has appreciated strongly in terms of the Mexican peso, shown in the lower right, since the eruption of the

crisis in Mexico last December. At first, the dollar's sharp appreciation in nominal terms, the black line, resulted in real dollar appreciation, the red line, as well. Subsequently, as Mexican consumer price inflation rose in response to the exchange rate shock, the real appreciation in the peso/dollar rate began to retreat. We expect the nominal peso/dollar rate to move up a bit further over the forecast period, but continued high, though slowing, Mexican inflation should result in less real appreciation of the dollar in terms of the peso, on balance, by the end of 1995 than we see now. I shall return to the implications of developments in Mexico for the U.S. economy shortly.

Chart 14 contains one development common this year to almost all the G-10 countries, including the United States: lower nominal interest rates, particularly long-term interest rates, shown on the right. The numbers in the tables in the middle panel show that on average U.S. short-term rates, on the left, are above foreign rates and have not fallen as much as those abroad. Just the opposite is the case, however, for long-term rates, on the right. Japanese long-term rates have come down the most, but the decline in U.S. rates noticeably exceeds that of foreign rates on average. Our forecast is for long-term rates abroad to change little from current levels over the rest of this year and next. In that event, the dollar can be expected to retrace some of its decline, as somewhat higher projected U.S. long-term rates move the interest differential over the next few months in favor of dollar assets; the dollar would subsequently remain little changed over the rest of the forecast period.

Of course, other factors can influence exchange rates as well. Two that are

particularly relevant now are listed in the lower left: U.S. fiscal policy and the long-run outlook for our current account balance. As market participants associate less risk with the long-term outlook for fiscal policy, perhaps in response to perceived progress on the budget in Congress and with the Administration, they may in the near term also have a more favorable view of the dollar, causing it to rise. Over a somewhat longer perspective, adjustment within the economy to a sustained lower fiscal deficit is likely to be associated with lower real interest rates and some decline in the dollar's spot exchange value that would induce some of the resources no longer consumed in the public sector to move into the traded goods sector.

Continued current account deficits also pose a risk to the dollar. Our econometric models based on post-war experience suggest that our external deficit would expand further over the medium term at current exchange rates. If market participants came to see the external deficit as implying ever higher U.S. net indebtedness to the rest of the world as a share of GDP, they would put downward pressure on the dollar. Arguing against widening deficits is the fact that U.S. unit labor costs in manufacturing, at current exchange rates, are well below those of our major industrial trading partners, as can be seen on the right. It may be that our econometric models do not incorporate sufficiently this competitive edge on the production side. A more favorable trade outcome would eliminate the hypothesized downward pressure on the dollar. The exchange markets will bring forward into current rates the expected outcome of these longer-term developments, but to what extent is difficult

to anticipate--adding some uncertainty to our outlook for the dollar.

Your next chart presents an overview of the foreign outlook for real growth. As you can see in the top left, we expect that growth in our trading partners, weighted by U.S. non-agricultural exports, fell sharply during the first half of this year from the robust growth rate of 1994. Through the end of 1996, we expect to see foreign growth recover somewhat and continue to outpace growth of U.S. real GDP. The top right box shows the critical role of the Asian developing countries in sustaining growth of foreign output, particularly in 1995. We expect that 1996 will see improvement in the industrial and, especially, the Latin American countries.

The middle left panel provides an insight into the relative importance of these regions for U.S. exports and output. The industrial countries account for more than half of U.S. exports, and Canada by itself is particularly important. Latin American and Asian developing countries each have a significant share. Details of the forecast for the foreign G-7 countries, Mexico, and the Asian developing countries are shown on the right. For the foreign G-7 countries, the slowdown in the first half of this year is concentrated in Canada and Japan. For the developing countries, weakness is most pronounced in Mexico.

The lower panels summarize our estimate of the impact of developments in Mexico on the U.S. economy and our outlook for Mexico and the other Latin American countries. Data already available confirm an extremely sharp drop in Mexican real output during the first quarter that accounts for much of the projected 1995 decline shown in the chart on the left.

The first-quarter decline in large part results from the policy measures adopted by the Mexican officials and the impact of the depreciation and rise in peso interest rates on Mexican consumer and business confidence. We expect that by the end of this year real output will no longer be falling, and we look for Mexican growth to resume next year. Some slowing of output growth in other Latin American countries, particularly Argentina, reflects spillover effects of the Mexican crisis into asset markets and on macroeconomic policies.

On the right, our projection for the U.S. trade balance with Mexico under current assumptions for Mexican real growth, prices, and the exchange value of the peso is compared with our projections last December. We expect that the bilateral balance for goods and services excluding oil will fall from a small surplus last year to a deficit of \$15 billion by the end of this year, a bit larger next year. Data for merchandise trade through April, the line, suggest that such a substantial turnaround in the trade balance with Mexico is already well underway. The severe decline in Mexican output that has occurred largely accounts for the speed with which U.S. trade with Mexico has adjusted. Looking ahead, real depreciation of the peso will help maintain a surplus for Mexico as positive real output growth returns in 1996. With the adjustment of our trade balance with Mexico largely behind us, an important negative influence on the change in U.S. net exports and activity during the first half of the year will have ended.

Chart 16 addresses in more detail our outlook for the major European industrial countries and Canada. Recent exchange rate movements are likely to affect the pattern of

growth in Europe, particularly this year. The top left panel groups Germany and France, two countries with relatively strong currencies, and compares them with the United Kingdom and Italy, two countries whose currencies depreciated substantially in 1992 and then fell somewhat further again this year. For example, the weighted-average value of the mark, on the right panel, has appreciated during this year to peak values for the floating rate period while the pound has fallen somewhat from the level it maintained in 1993-94. In both pairs of countries, growth is expected to slow noticeably this year from the robust pace last year. We project some boost to growth this year for the United Kingdom and Italy from their external sectors while in Germany and France net exports will contribute little. However, despite the near-term slowing, for all these countries growth is expected to average about 3 percent over the rest of the forecast period, moving these economies by the end of 1996 close to our estimates of their respective levels of potential output.

In contrast, real output growth in Canada fell drastically in the first half of the year and is expected to revive only to about 2-1/2 percent over the next six quarters--well below last year's rate. The Canadian outlook in part reflects the slowing to date of output growth in the United States and the weak projection for the current quarter. In addition, both monetary and fiscal policy in Canada were tightened in 1994. The panel on the right shows the upward movement in the Canadian overnight rate of nearly 450 basis points, on balance, since the beginning of 1994. While the Bank of Canada has begun to ease that rate back down, it remains quite high. In addition, the Canadian government has injected greater fiscal restraint

this year and last. The structural budget deficit over this time is estimated to have contracted by about 1-1/2 percentage points of GDP. As a consequence of the lags with which these policy actions have their effects, we expect Canadian real output growth to remain subdued over the forecast period. We were surprised, however, as were most analysts, by the extent of slowing that occurred in the first quarter, when real output grew less than 1 percent at an annual rate. Some of this deceleration may subsequently be revised away or reversed in later quarters, but there is clearly some risk that such an abrupt drop, which was moderated only by large inventory accumulation, could be a harbinger--or could precipitate--even weaker growth than we are forecasting.

Your next chart presents the elements of our thinking about the outlook for the Japanese economy. As shown in the upper left, we look for real growth in Japan to begin to strengthen during the second half of this year but to remain subdued through the forecast period. The strength of the yen is a major factor restraining expected Japanese growth. However, for some of the other Asian countries, appreciation of the yen in terms of their currencies will boost exports so that growth in the Asian developing countries is expected to continue strong, although it will slow a bit from its very high rate in 1994.

As can be seen in the right panel, Japanese growth of around 2 percent per year is not sufficient to narrow the gap between actual and potential output, and we project a widening in that gap through the end of next year. The low level of resource utilization in Japan and the appreciation of the yen have contributed to deflation in goods prices. The lower left

panel shows the changes over the preceding twelve months for two major components of the consumer price index, services less rent and goods less food, and for the producers' price index. Inflation in the price of services, which are domestically produced and for the most part do not compete directly with imports, has been between 1 and 2 percent over the past year. However, prices of goods have actually been falling for some time. This deflation is not limited to imported final goods, but likely does reflect the influence of competing imported goods and the falling prices of imported inputs.

The panel on the right shows that critical asset prices--those for stocks and for land--are also falling in Japan--as they have been for some time. The continuing decline in land prices has added to the woes of the Japanese banking system and risks increasing the already large burden of nonperforming loans. Lower land prices reduce further the value of collateral behind real estate loans on the books of the banks, already a much-troubled portion of banks' portfolios. Further declines in stock prices would lessen the market value of the hidden reserves of the banks and so reduce the capacity of Japanese banks to finance additional loan loss from hidden reserves. While these problems have been acknowledged for some time by Japanese authorities, progress in terms of improving banks' balance sheets has been limited. Continued declines in these asset prices add to the perceived risk of a banking crisis in Japan. At the very least, it appears that Japanese banks are not in a position to be particularly supportive of the recovery of economic activity.

Without any foreseeable pressure on resource availability soon and with asset prices and goods prices falling, easing by the Bank of Japan would seem warranted. In our forecast we have assumed a small further reduction in the call money rate, but no discrete easing move, such as a discount rate cut, by the Bank of Japan. While we are forecasting some recovery in real growth in Japan, without even greater impetus from monetary policy or additional fiscal stimulus, there is downside risk of a return to recession in Japan in our outlook. Indeed, Governor Matsushita, in his press conference today following the Bank of Japan's branch managers' meeting, suggested that a discount rate cut is under consideration.

Mike Prell will now present the committee's forecast.

Michael J. Prell
July 5, 1995

To wrap up quickly, let me just draw your attention for a moment to the last chart, which summarizes the forecasts you submitted. You've lowered your sights considerably for real GDP growth this year, with the central tendency now bracketing the staff forecast, at 1-1/2 to 2 percent. The silver lining in that dark cloud is that the central tendency of your inflation forecasts is a tad lower now, at 3 to 3-1/4 percent.

You are generally looking for some pickup in growth next year, with the central tendency of forecasts being 2-1/4 to 2-3/4 percent, to the high side of the staff projection; your price forecasts center on 3 percent, close to our prediction.

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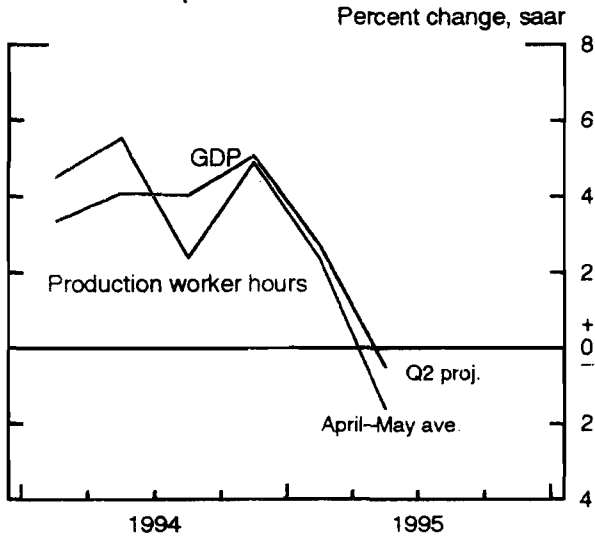
Material for
Staff Presentation to the
Federal Open Market Committee

July 5, 1995

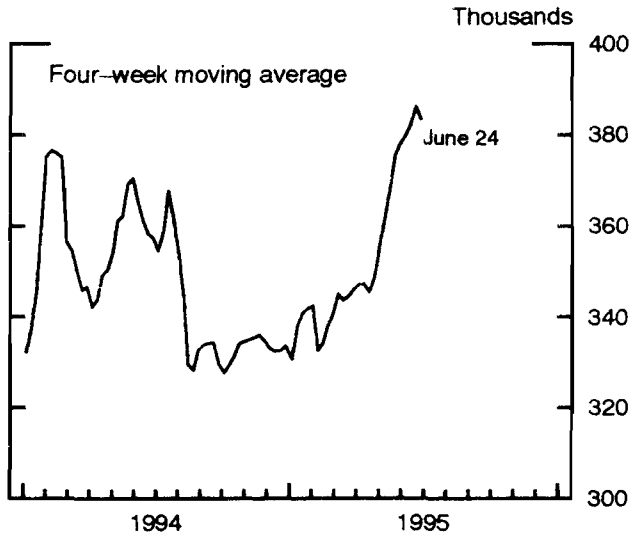
Chart 1

Second-Quarter Indicators

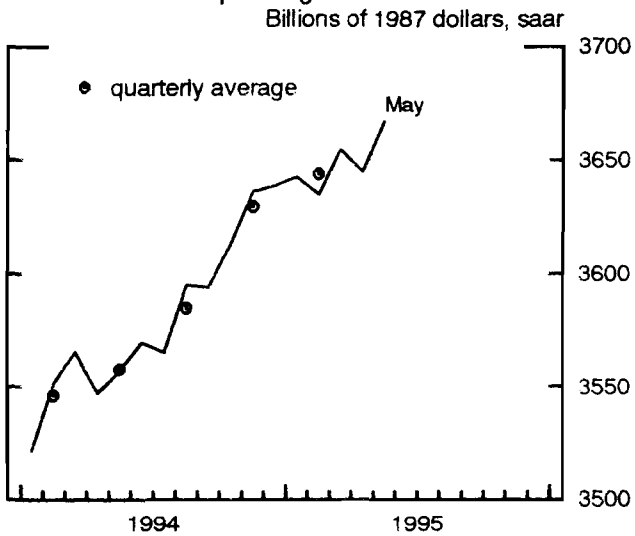
Hours and Output Growth



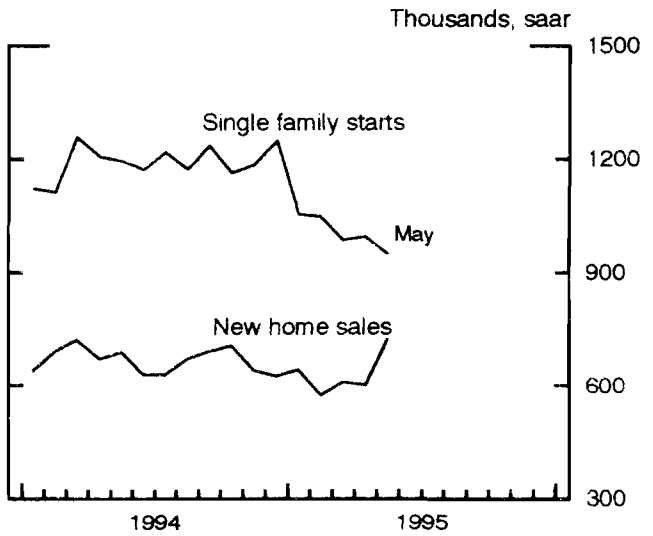
Initial Claims



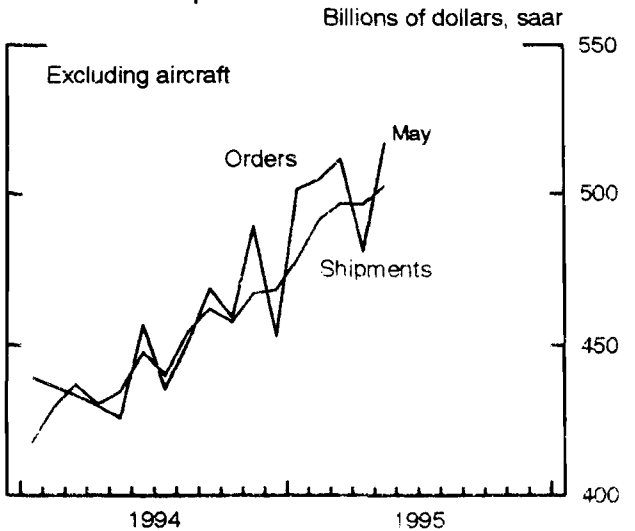
Real Consumer Spending



Home Sales and Starts



Nondefense Capital Goods



Nonresidential Construction

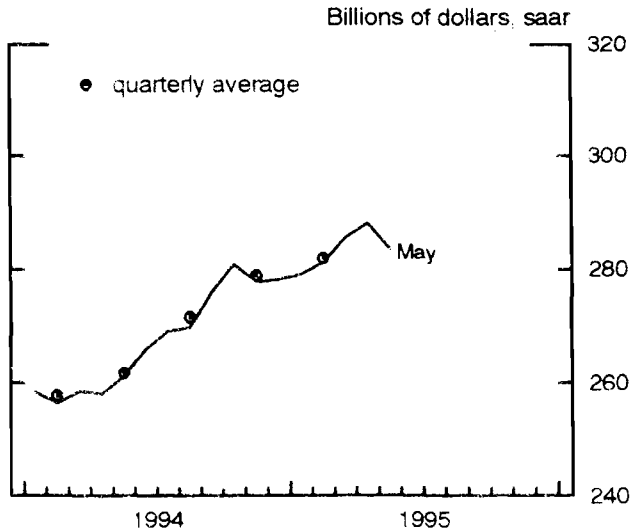


Chart 2

Monetary and Fiscal Outlook

- Federal funds rate assumed to remain at 6 percent into early 1996. Rate then declines somewhat, given lower inflation and effects of fiscal restraint on the “natural” rate of interest.
- Bond yields rise appreciably by the end of this year and reverse only a portion of that back-up during 1996.
- Lenders become more cautious—but only mildly so.
- Dollar little changed through 1996.

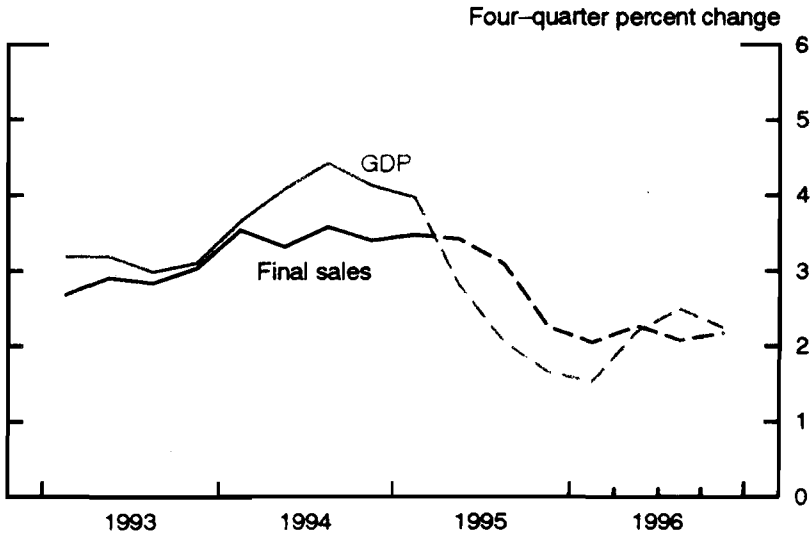
Federal Deficit Reduction—Annual Increments

	Billions of Dollars of Deficit Reduction	
	<u>FY 1996</u>	<u>FY 1997</u>
Budget resolution (before tax cuts)	40	40
President's plan (CBO reestimate)	18 (14)	6 (4)
<hr/>		
Greenbook assumptions	30	25
Purchases	8	6
Transfers, grants, subsidies	25	24
Taxes	-4	-8
Interest payments	1	3

Chart 3

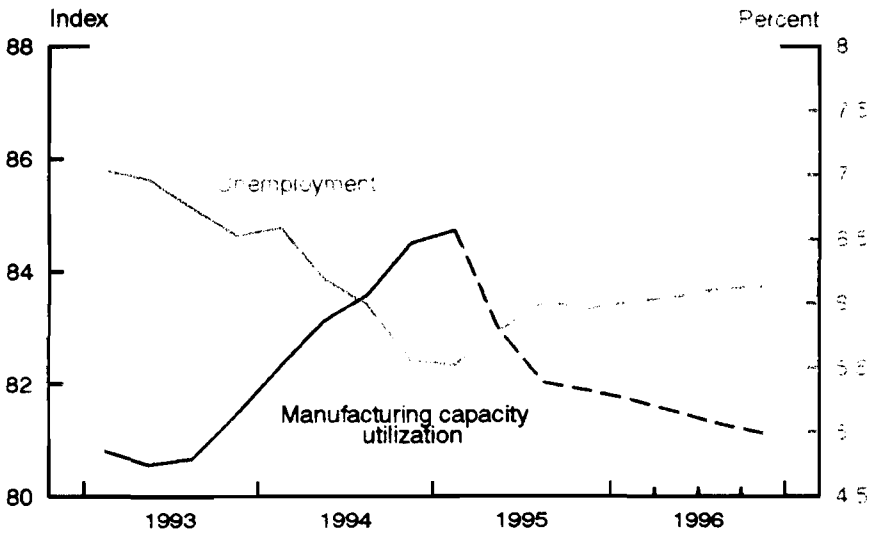
Forecast Summary

Real GDP



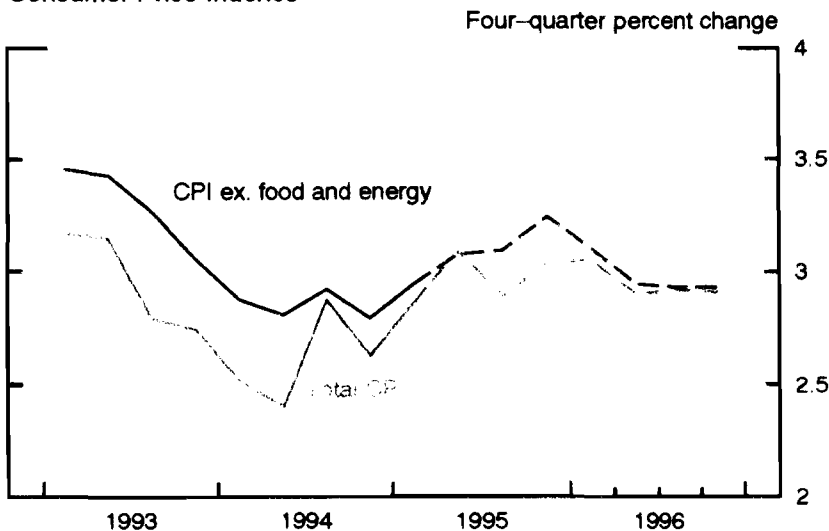
Q4/Q4 Percent Change		
	GDP	Final Sales
1993	3.1	3.0
94	4.1	3.4
95	1.7	2.2
96	2.2	2.2

Resource Utilization Rates



Q4 Average		
	Unemp.	C.U.
1993	6.5	81.4
94	5.6	84.5
95	6.0	81.9
96	6.1	81.1

Consumer Price Indexes



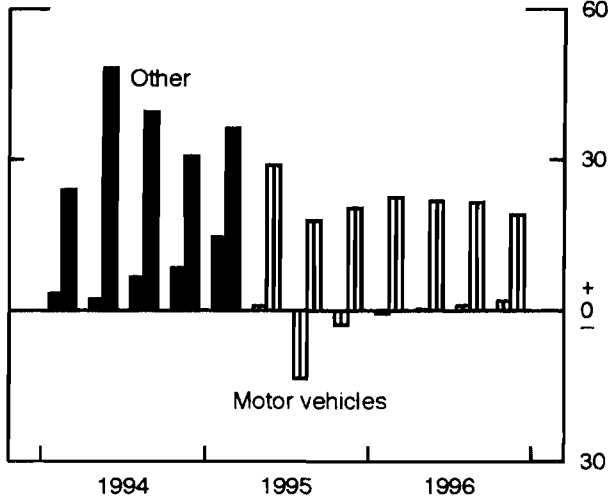
Q4/Q4 Percent Change		
	CPI	CPIX
1993	2.7	3.1
94	2.6	2.8
95	3.0	3.2
96	2.9	2.9

Chart 4

Outlook for Economic Activity

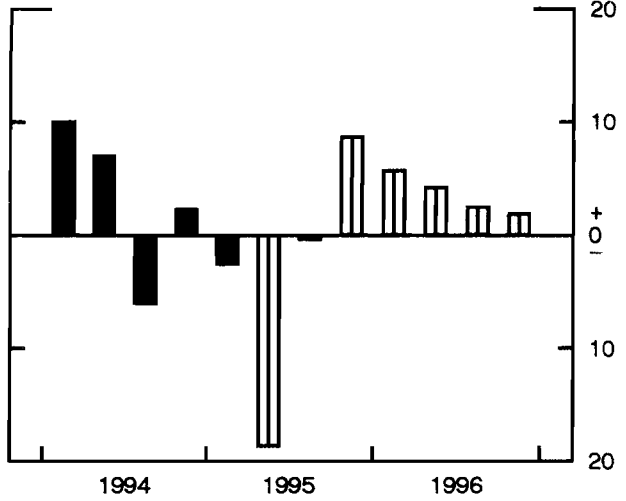
Inventory Investment

Billions of 1987 dollars, saar



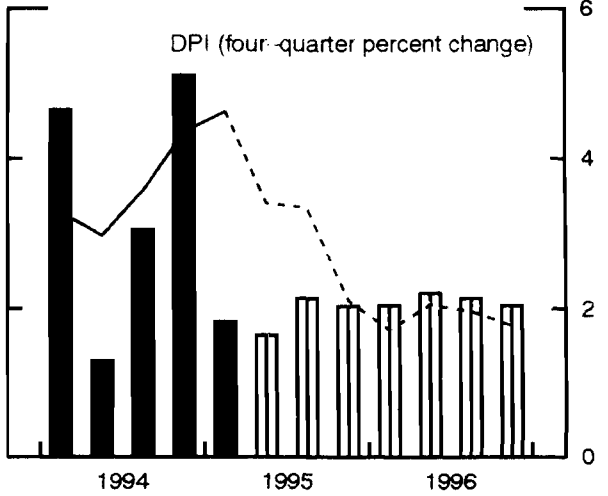
Residential Investment

Percent change, saar



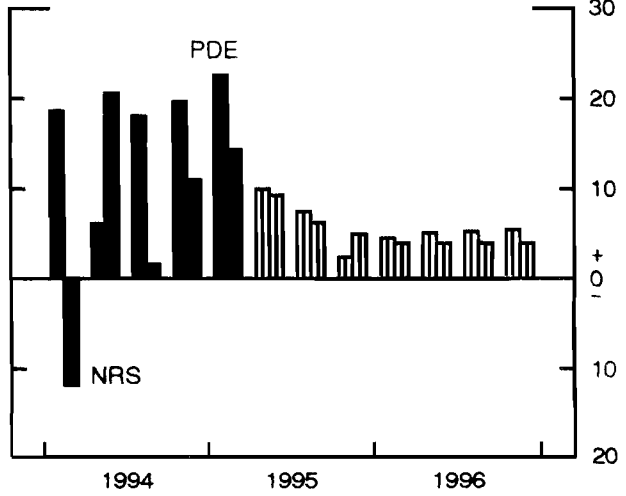
Personal Consumption Expenditures

Percent change, saar



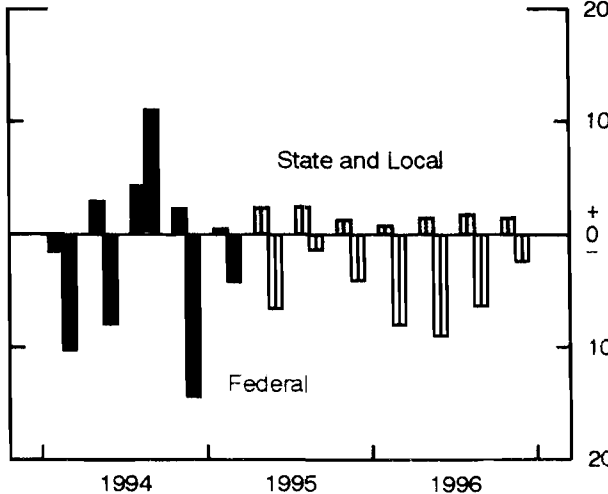
Business Fixed Investment

Percent change, saar



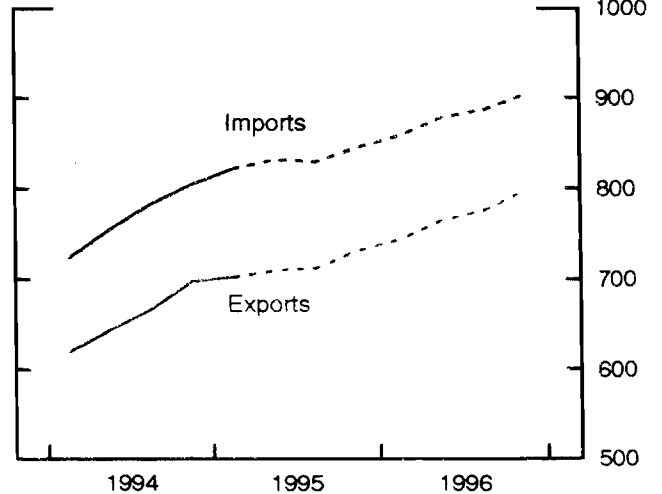
Government Purchases

Percent change, saar



Net Exports

Billions of 1987 dollars

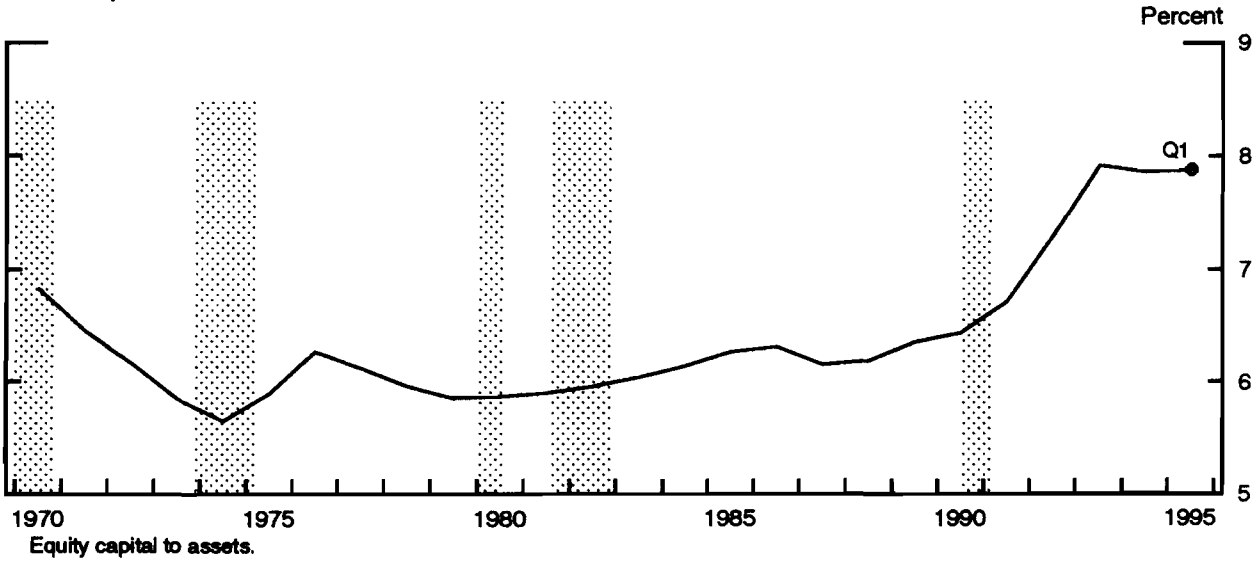


Note: All data are in constant dollars.

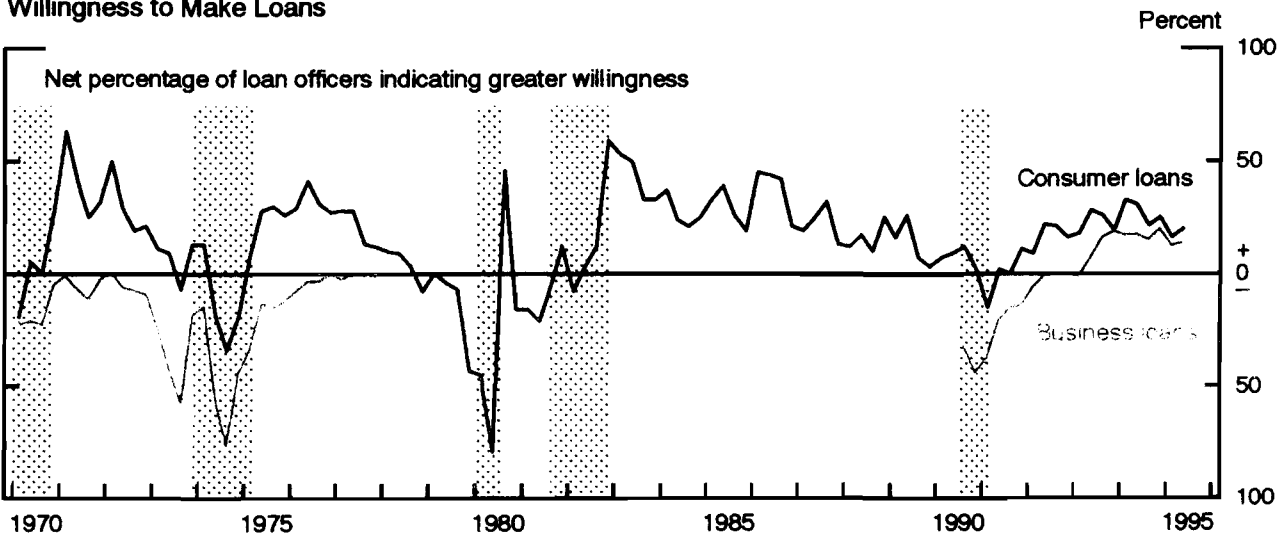
Chart 5

Credit Availability

Bank Capital-to-Asset Ratio



Willingness to Make Loans



Bank Loan Rate Spreads

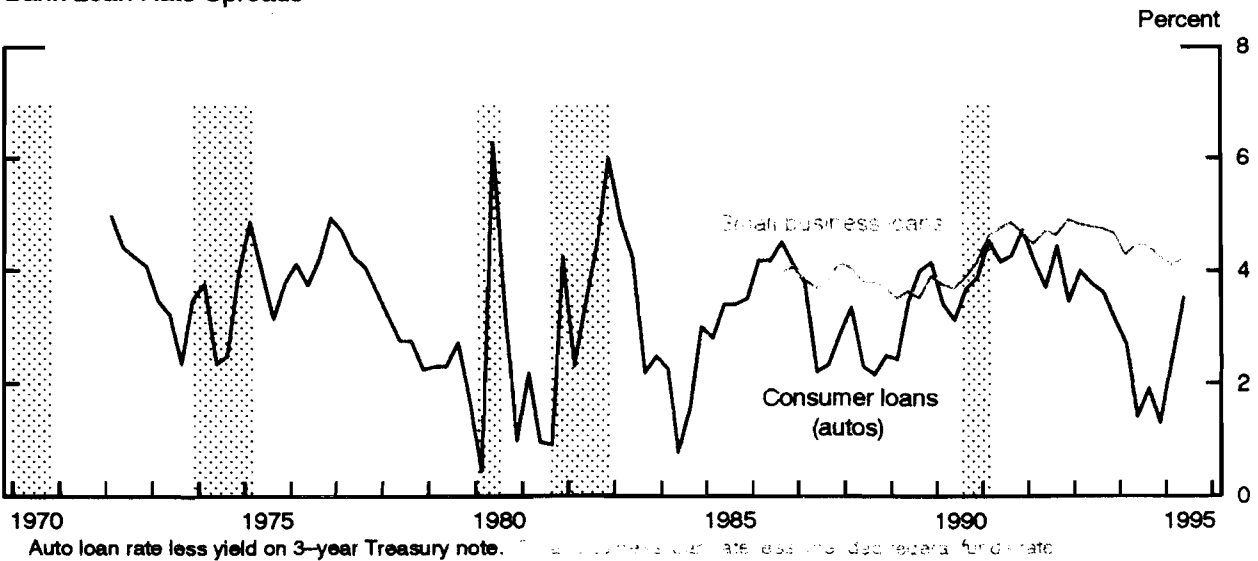
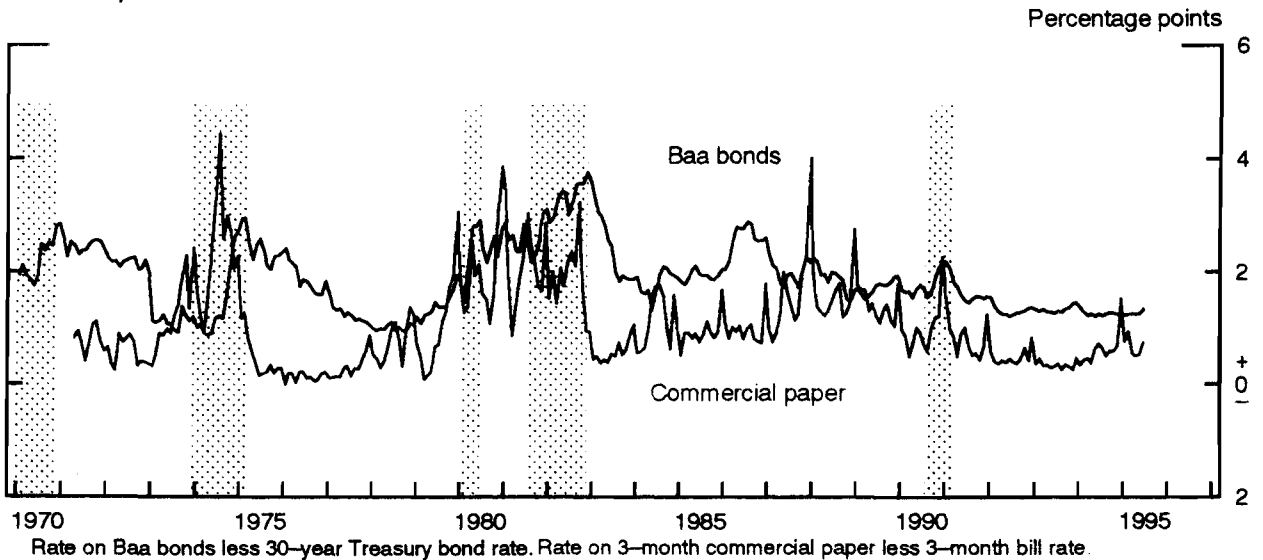


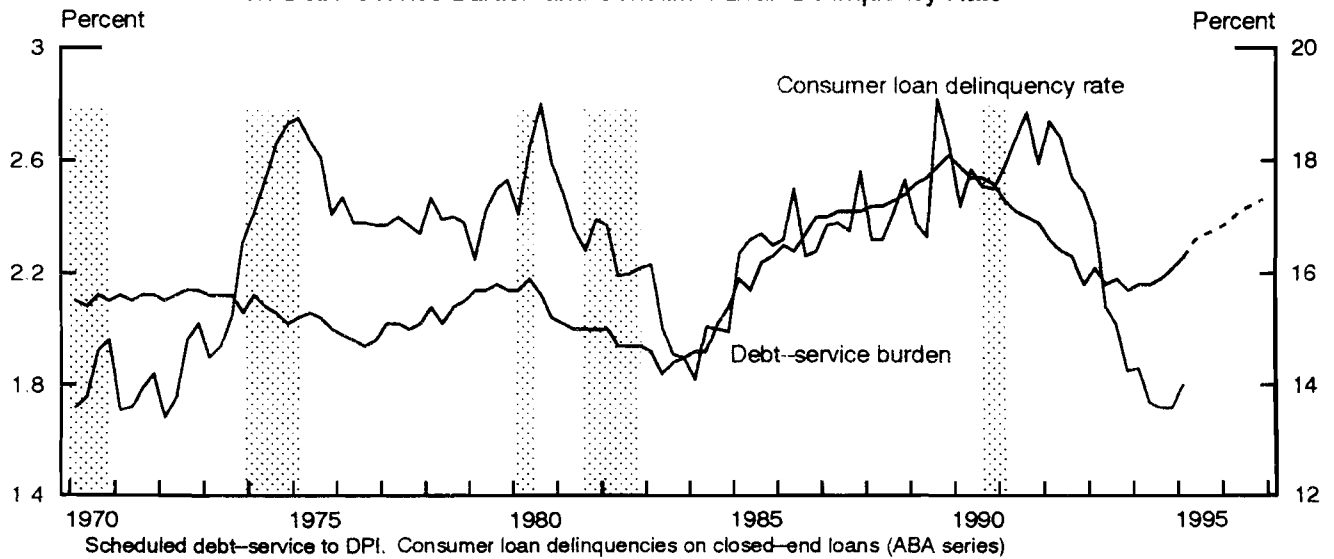
Chart 6

Credit Availability

Market Spreads on Business Debt



Household Sector Debt-Service Burden and Consumer Loan Delinquency Rate



Corporate Net Interest Outlays to Cash Flow and Business Loan Delinquencies

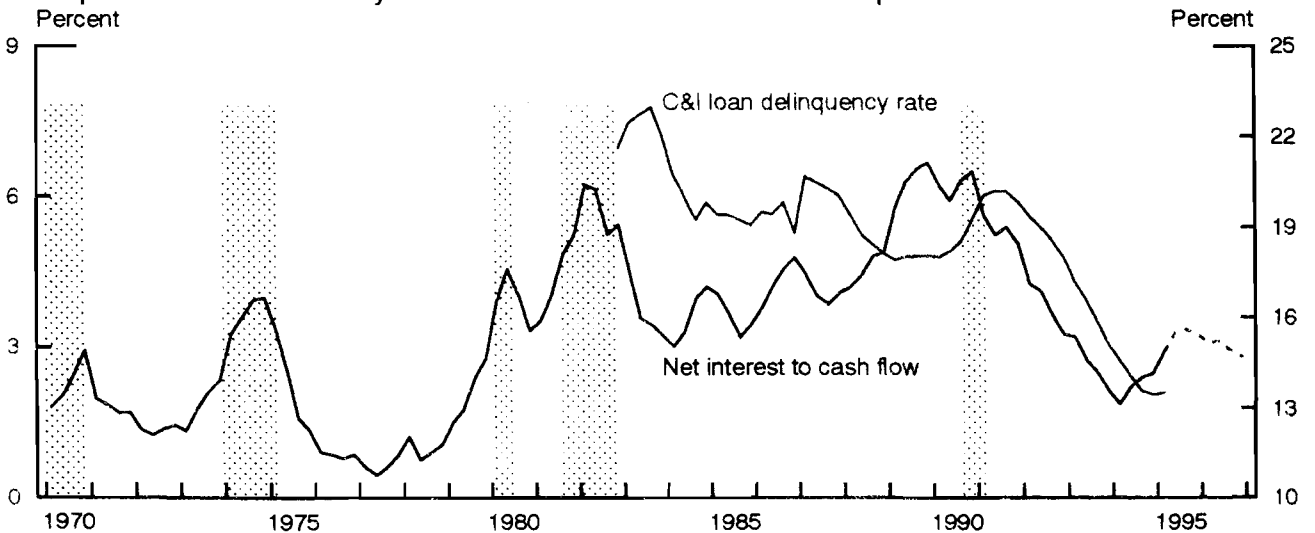
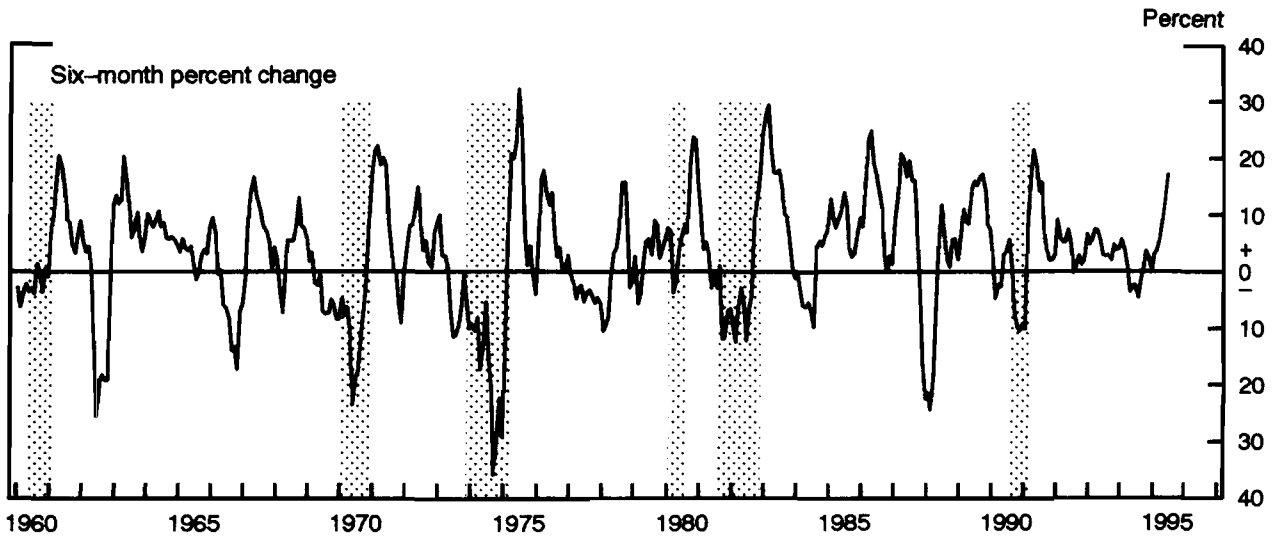


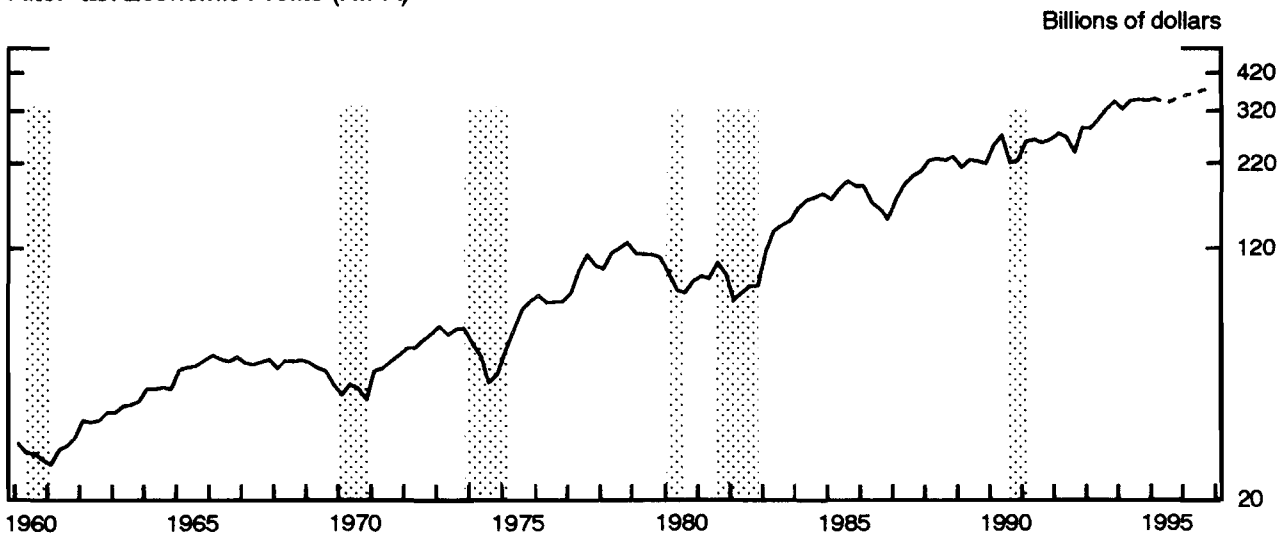
Chart 7

Stock Market

S&P 500 Price Index



After-tax Economic Profits (NIPA)



Earnings-Price and Dividend-Price Ratios (S&P 500)

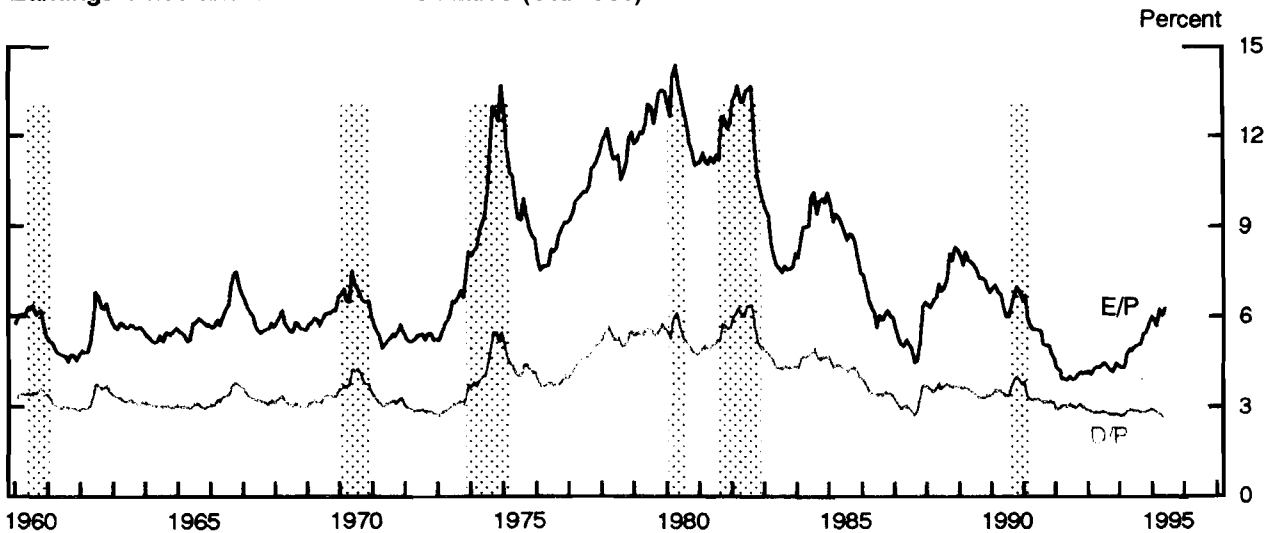
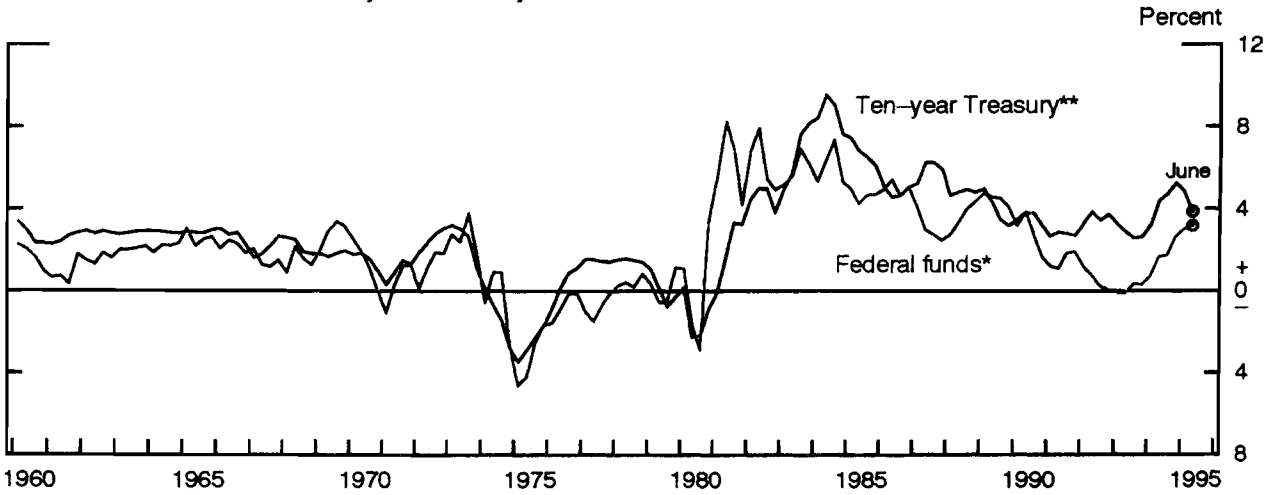


Chart 8

Real Interest Rates and Alternative Fiscal Scenarios

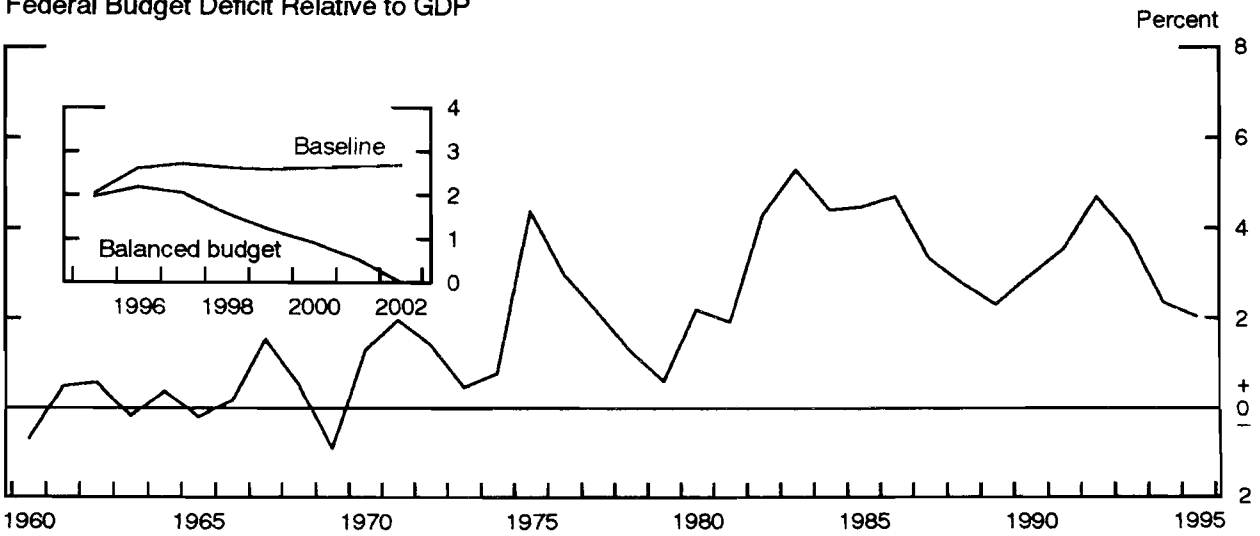
Real Federal Funds and Ten-year Treasury Rates



*Real federal funds rate is the nominal rate on federal funds less the change in the CPI over the previous four quarters.

**Real ten-year Treasury rate is the nominal rate on ten-year notes less the average annual change in the CPI over the previous five years.

Federal Budget Deficit Relative to GDP



Real Federal Funds Rate

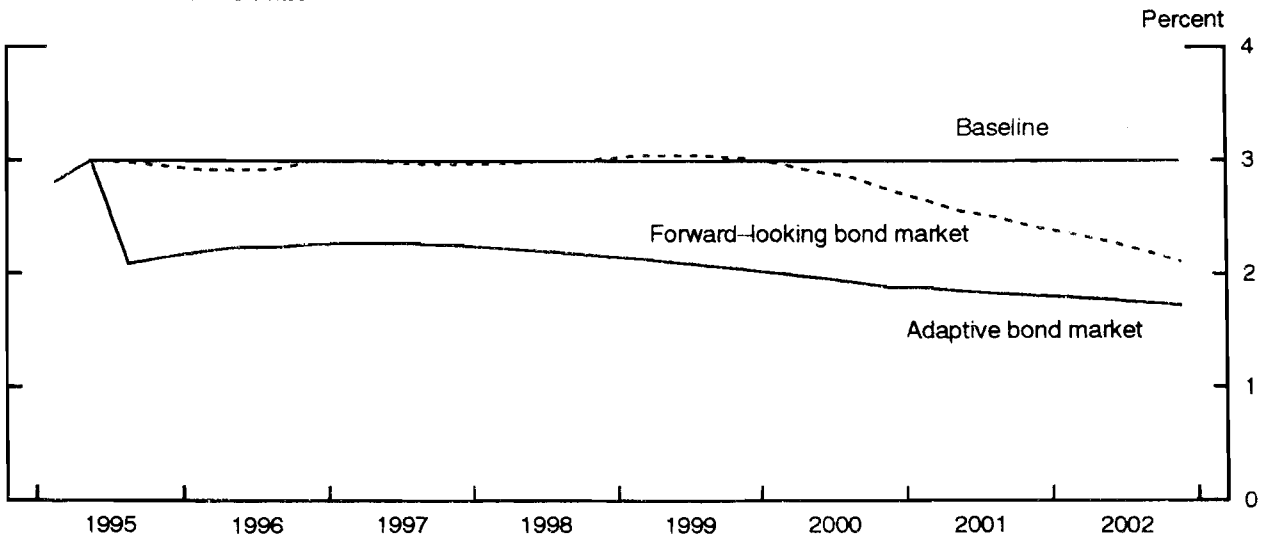
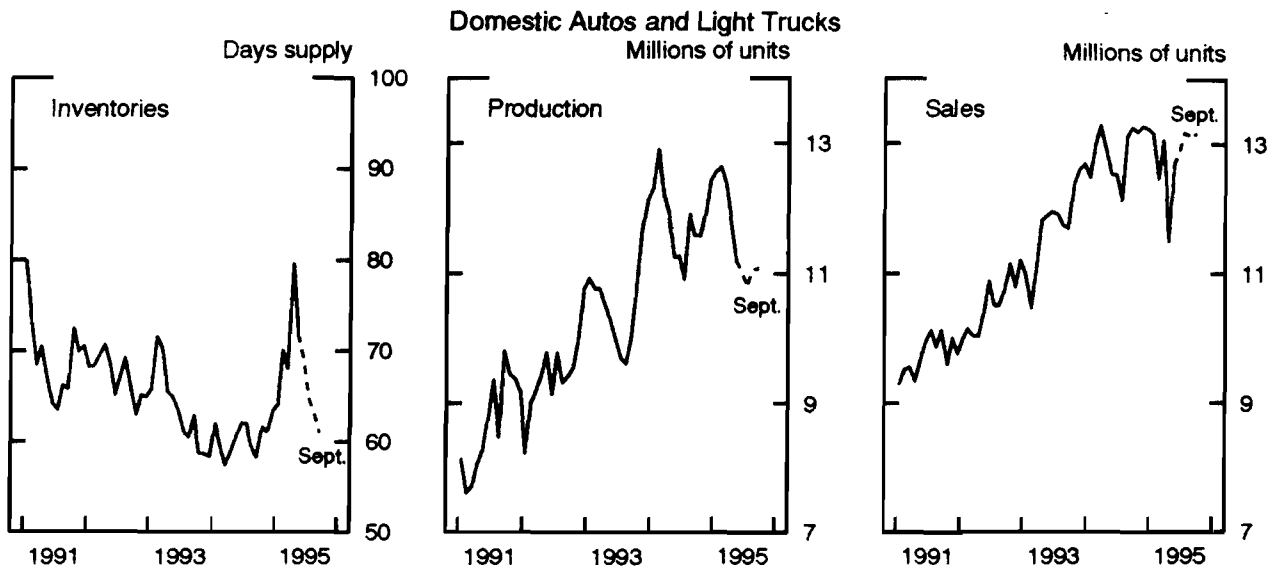
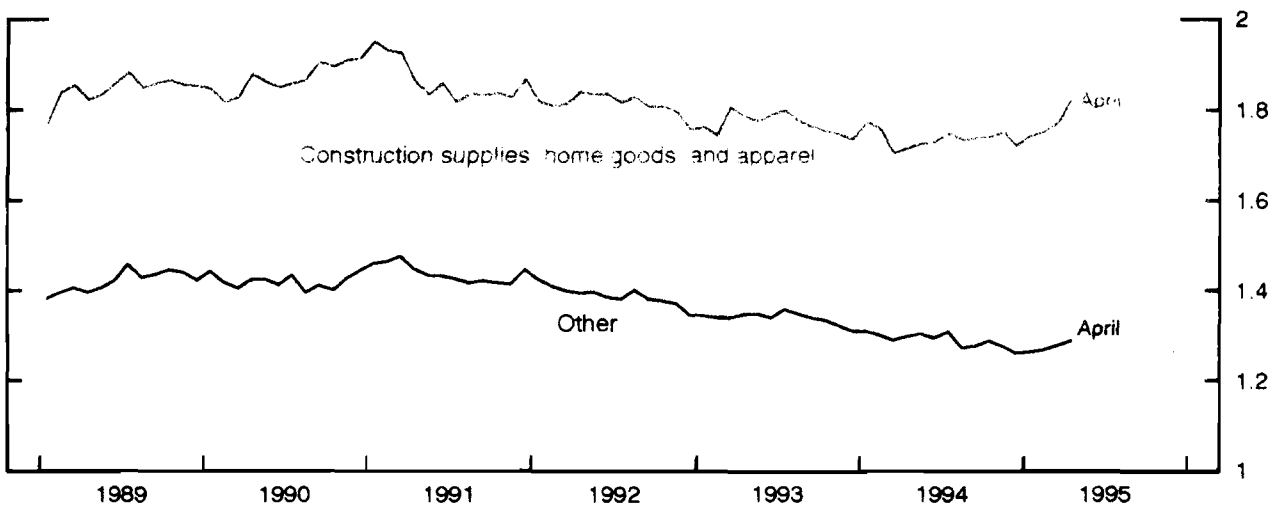


Chart 9

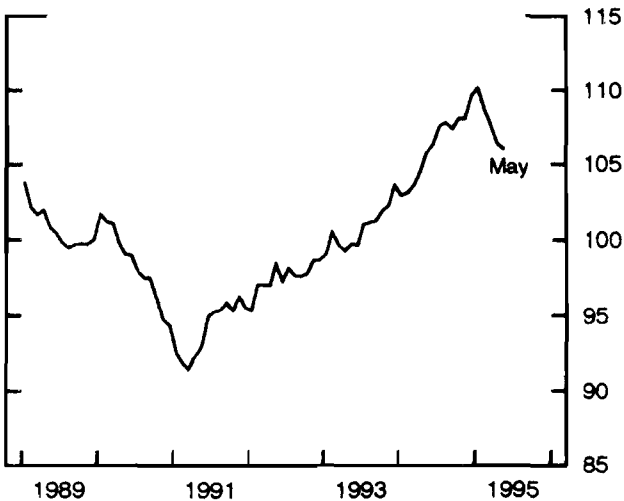
Inventories, Production, and Sales



Inventory-Sales Ratio — Manufacturing and Trade Excluding Motor Vehicles



IP Index for Construction Supplies, Home Goods, and Apparel



New Orders for Construction Supplies, Home Goods, and Apparel

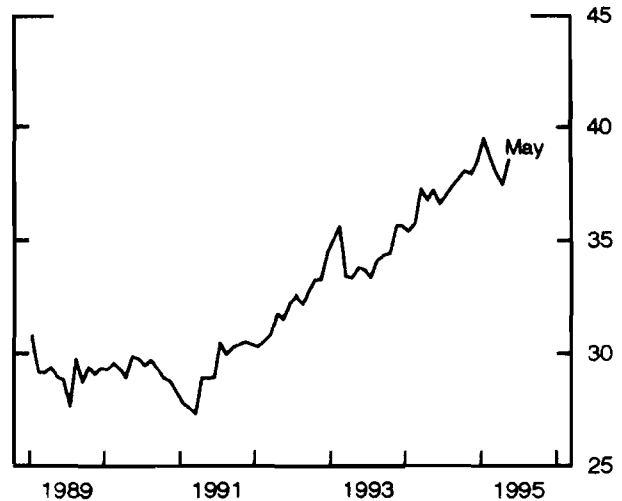
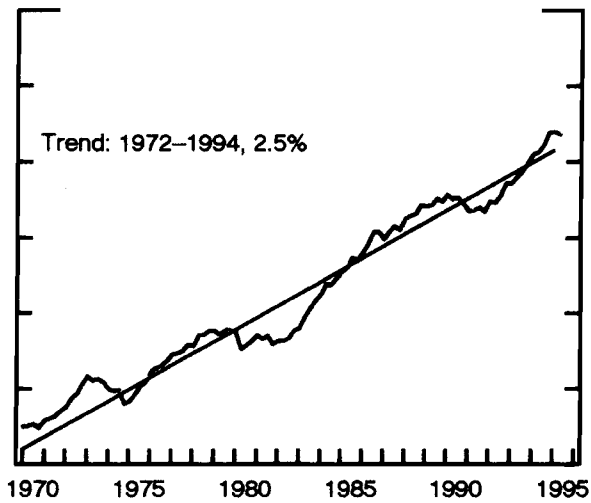


Chart 10

Consumer Spending

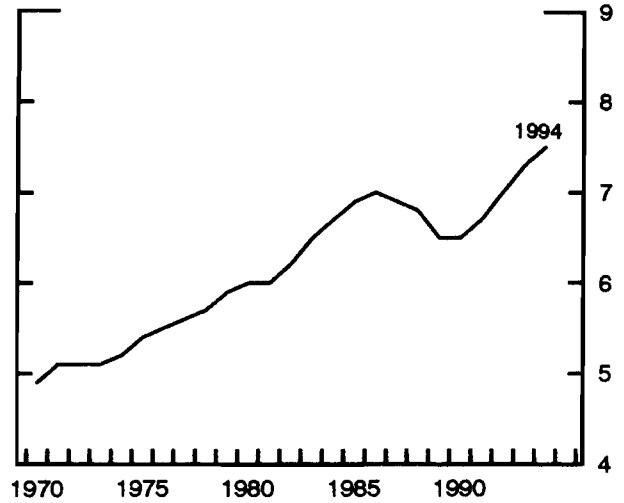
Real PCE Durables and Nondurables

Billions of \$1987, saar



Median Age of Auto Stock*

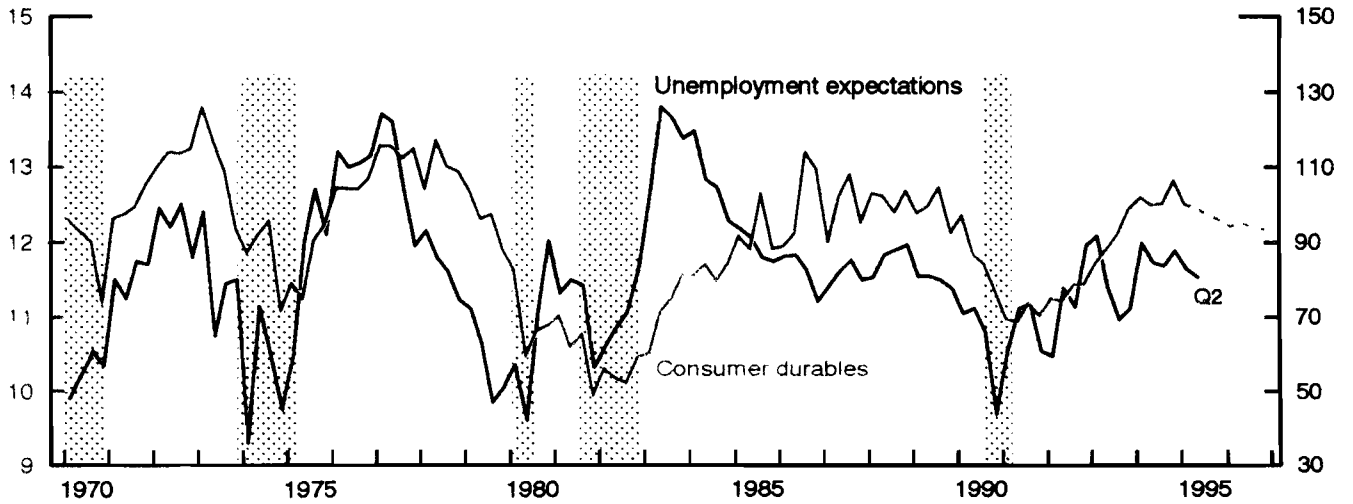
Years



*Year ending July 1.

Unemployment Expectations and Consumer Durables*

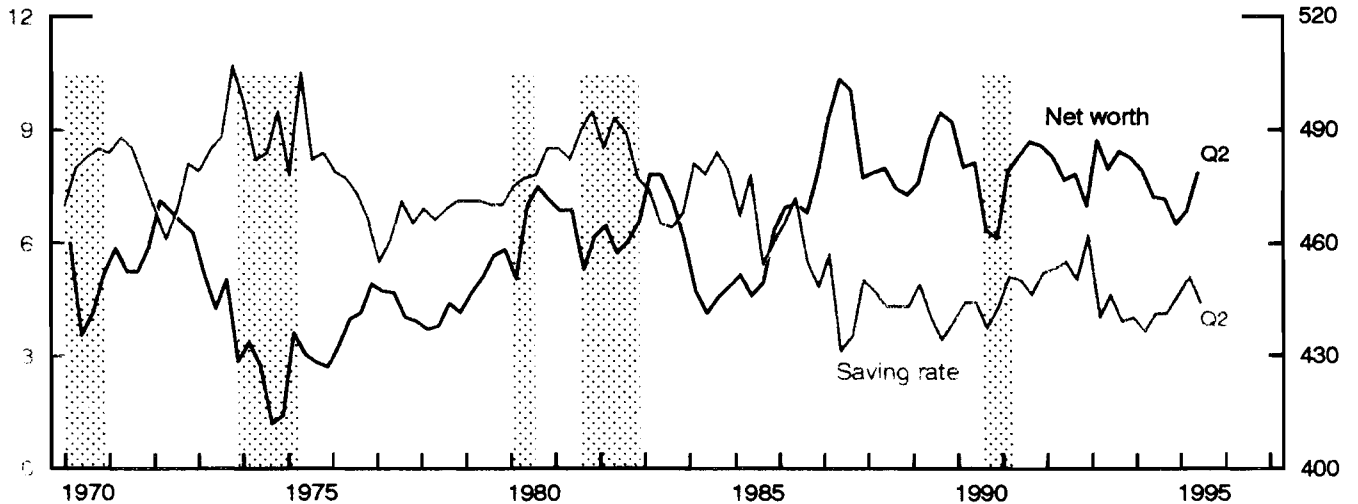
Percent of DPI



*Including leased autos.

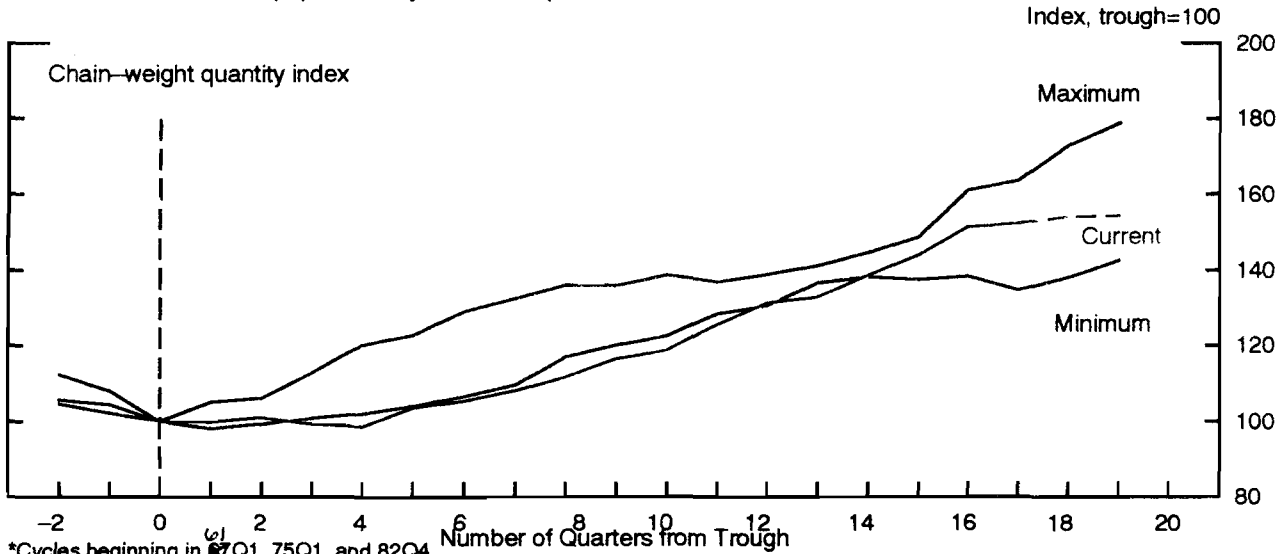
Household Net Worth and Personal Saving

Percent of DPI



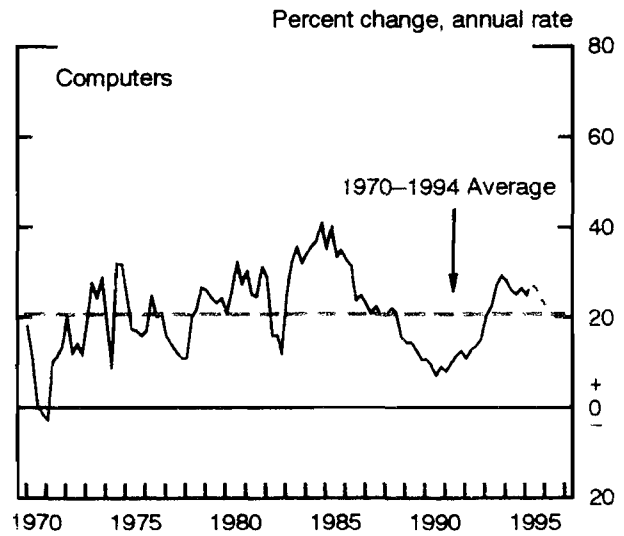
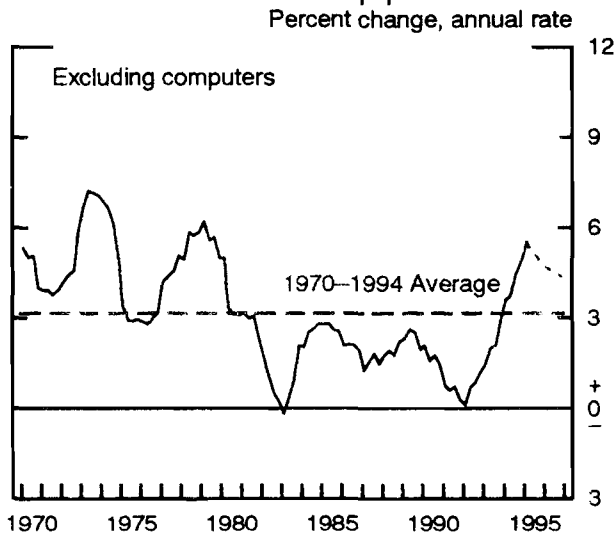
Business Equipment

Producers' Durable Equipment, Cyclical Comparison*

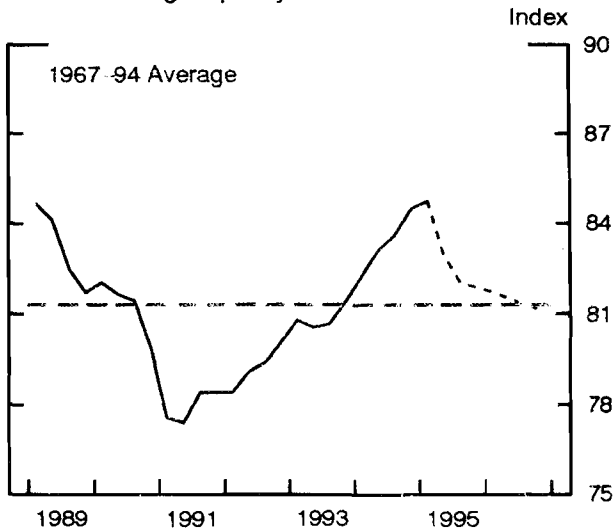


*Cycles beginning in 67Q1, 75Q1, and 82Q4

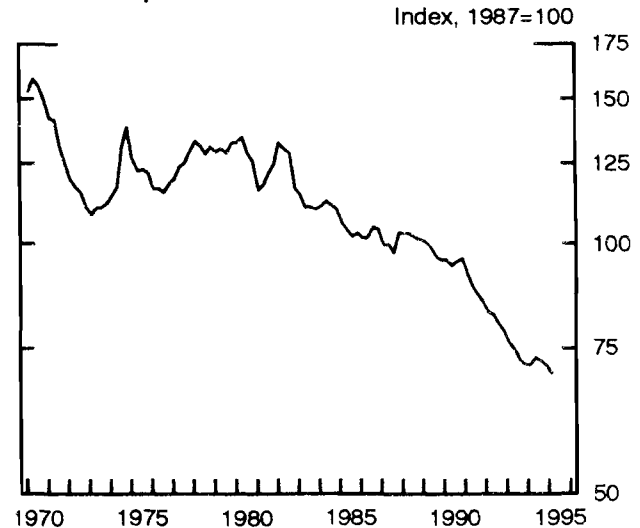
Growth in the Net Stock of Equipment



Manufacturing Capacity Utilization Rate



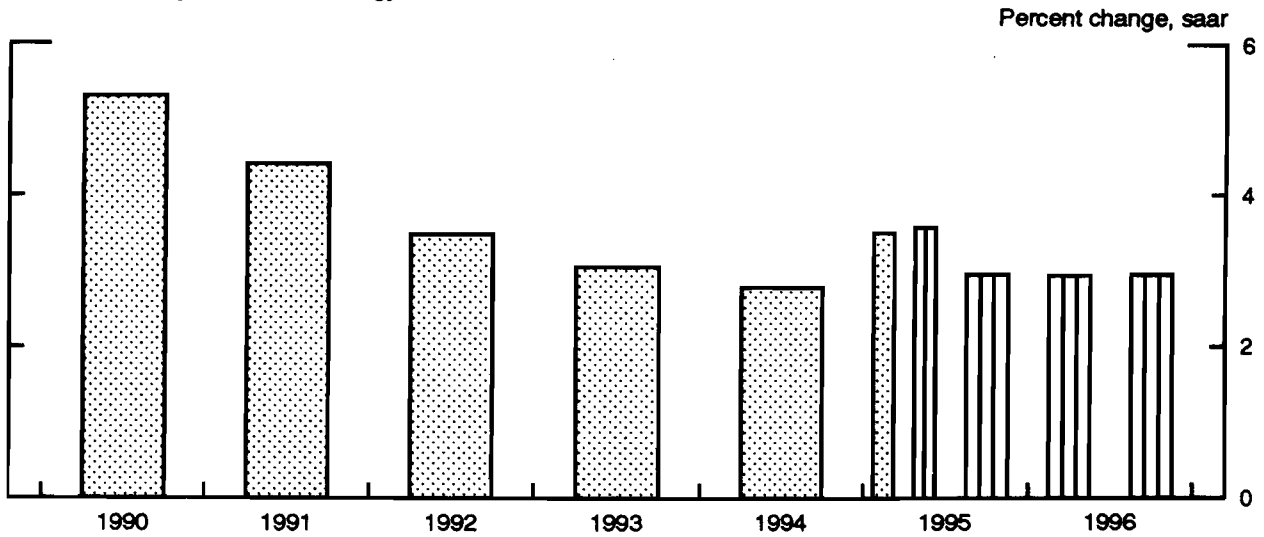
Cost of Capital* Relative to Cost of Labor



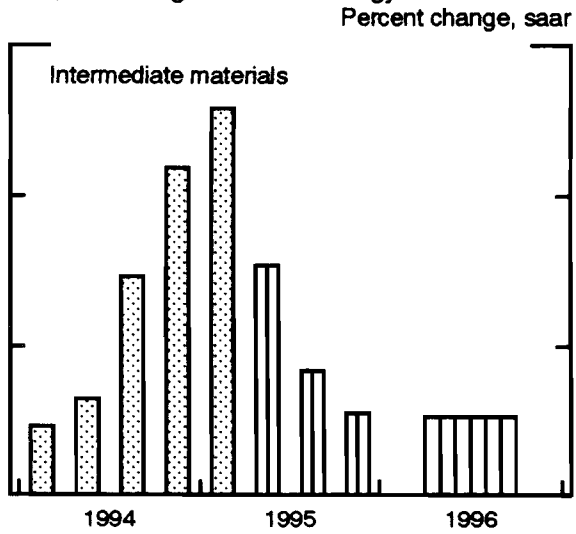
*Producers' durable equipment

Chart 12
Inflation

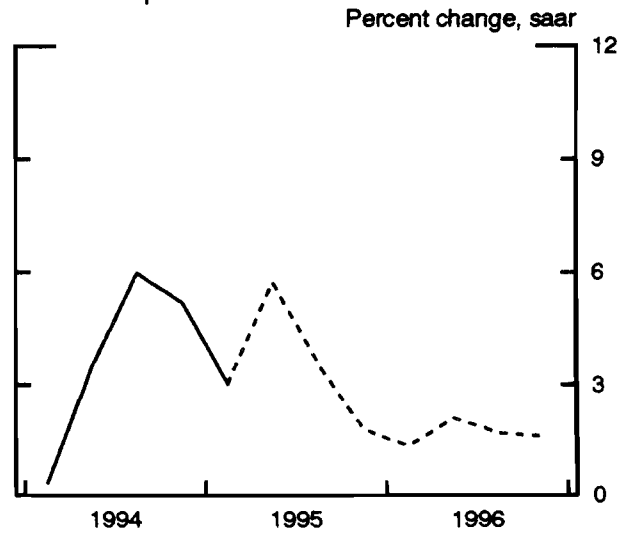
CPI, Excluding Food and Energy



PPI, Excluding Food and Energy



Non-oil Import Prices



Employment Cost Index

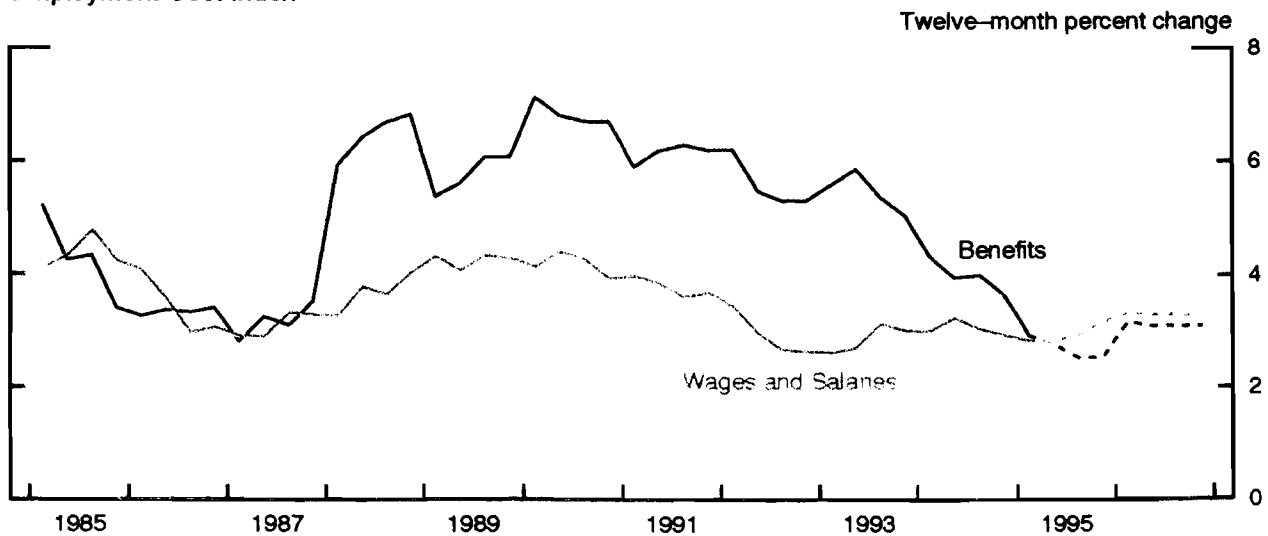
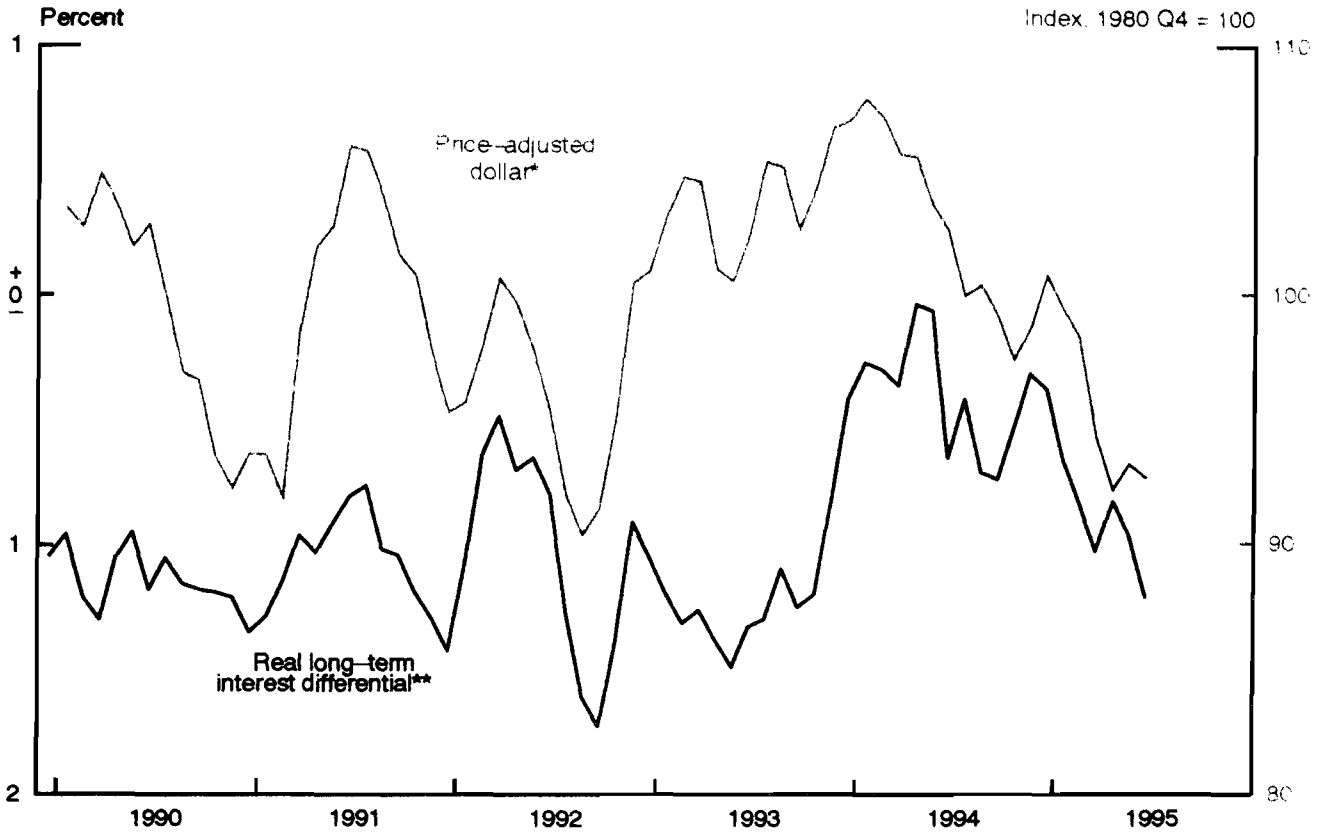


Chart 13

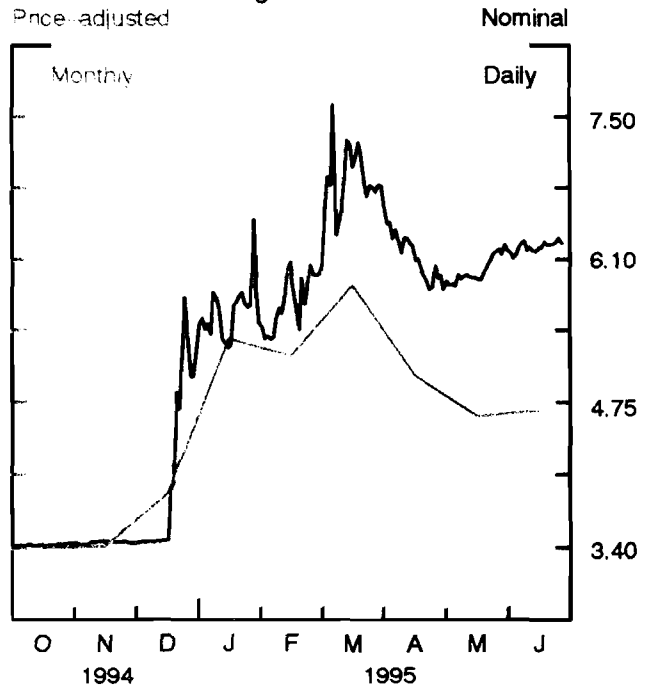
Dollar Exchange Rates

The Dollar and the Interest Differential
Percent



* Weighted averages against foreign G-10 countries, adjusted by relative consumer prices.
 ** Difference between rates on long-term U.S. 10-year government bond and a weighted average of foreign G-10 benchmark government bonds adjusted for expected inflation.

Peso-Dollar Exchange Rates

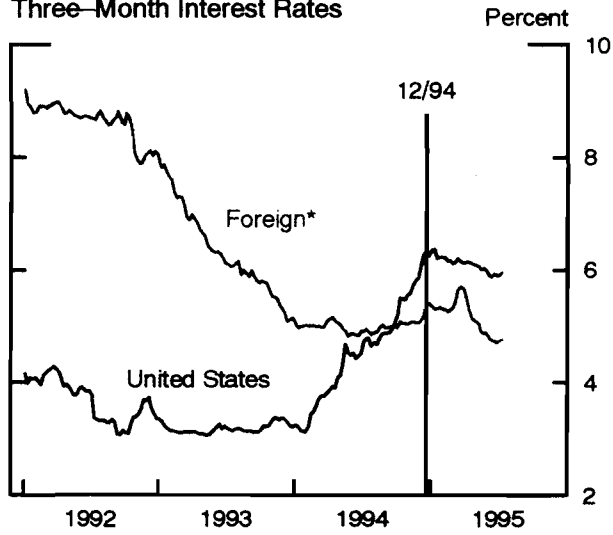


	Percent change 12/94 to 7/3/95
Yen	-15
Deutschemerk	-12
Pound sterling	-2
Italian lira	-1
Canadian dollar	-1
G-10 Average	-9

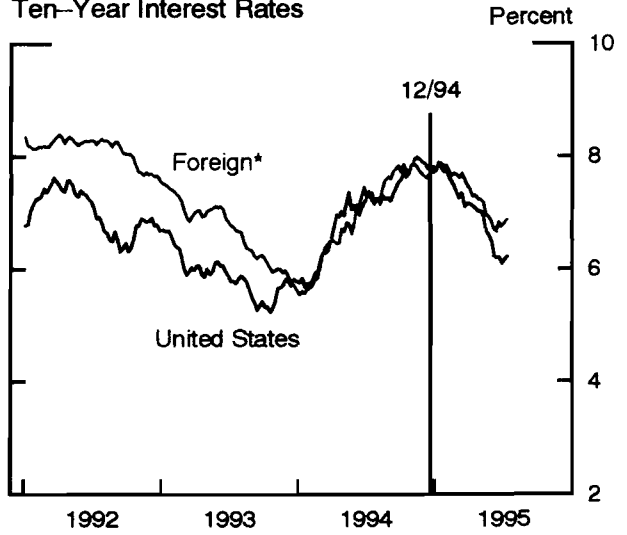
Chart 14

Interest Rates

Three-Month Interest Rates



Ten-Year Interest Rates



* Multilateral trade-weighted average for foreign G-10 countries.

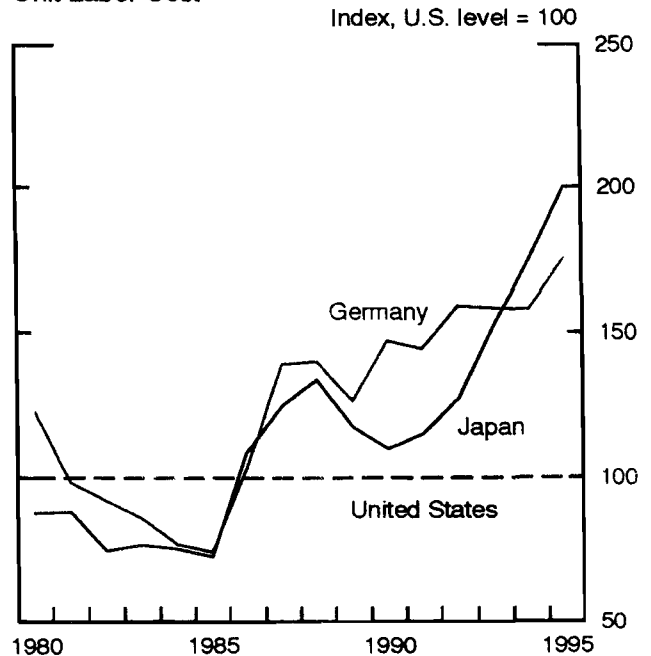
Three-month	Level	Change
	7/3/95	12/94 to 7/3/95
Germany	4.50	-0.79
Japan	1.17	-1.17
Foreign G-10	4.76	-0.56
United States	5.95	-0.34

Ten-year	Level	Change
	7/3/95	12/94 to 7/3/95
Germany	6.94	-0.51
Japan	2.80	-1.73
Foreign G-10	6.88	-0.82
United States	6.22	-1.59

Influences on the dollar:

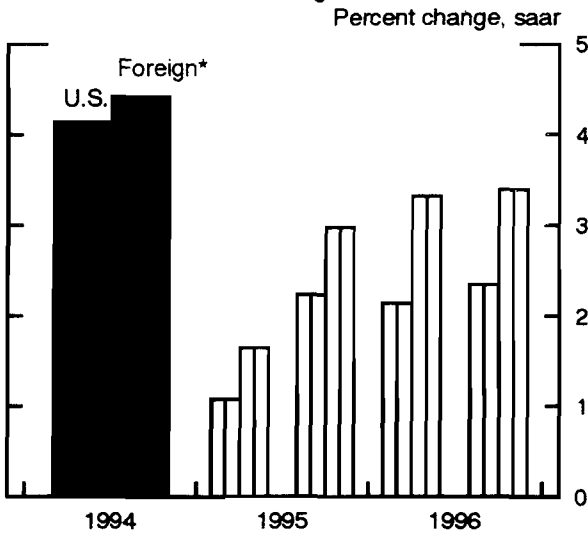
- Uncertainty about U.S. fiscal policy
- Long-run outlook for U.S. current account.

Unit Labor Cost



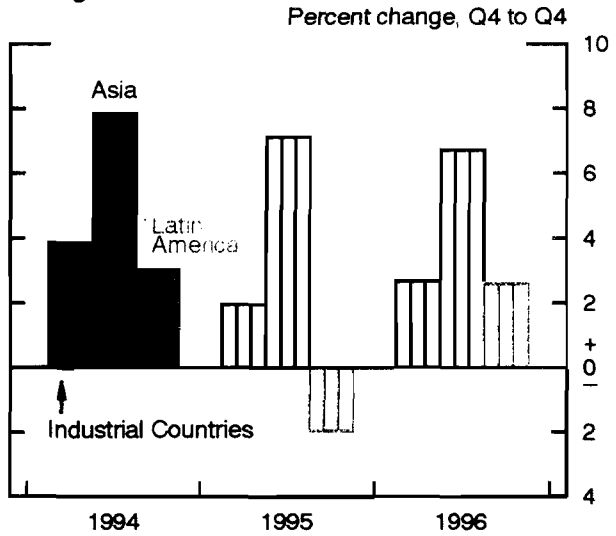
Foreign Outlook

Real GDP: U.S. and Foreign



* G-6 plus 16 other industrial countries and 12 developing countries. U.S. nonagricultural export weights.

Foreign Real GDP*



* U.S. nonagricultural export weights.

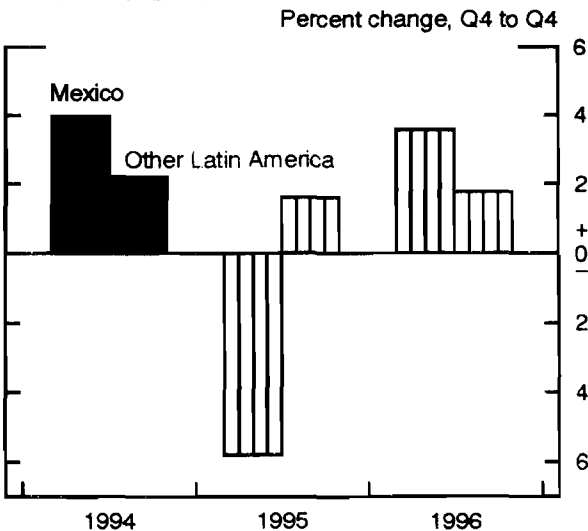
Share of U.S. Exports: 1992-1994

Industrial Countries	59
<i>of which</i>	
Foreign G-7	46
Canada	22
Japan	10
Latin America	17
<i>of which</i>	
Mexico	9
Asian Developing	21

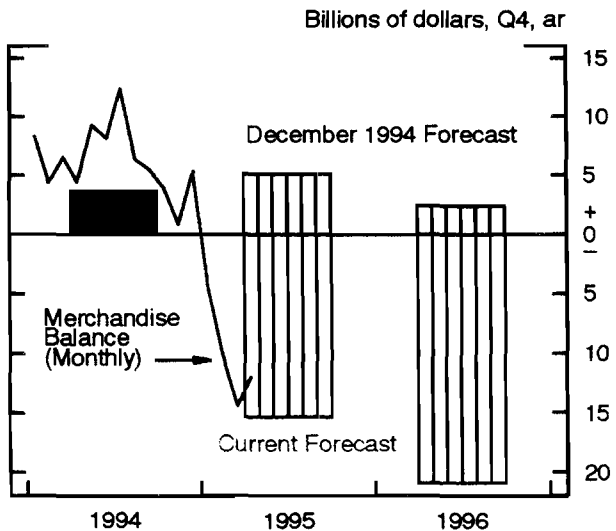
Foreign Growth

	Percent Change, saar		
	1995 H1	1995 H2	1996
Japan	0.6	1.8	2.0
Canada	-0.1	2.4	2.6
European G-7	2.5	3.0	2.9
Mexico	-9.5	-2.0	3.6
Asian LDCs	7.2	7.0	6.7

Real GDP: Latin America



U.S. Trade Balance with Mexico*

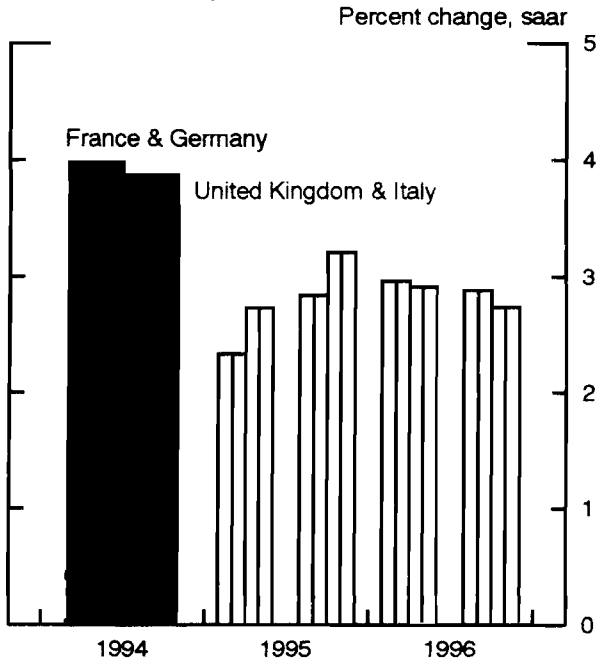


* Goods and services, excluding oil.

Chart 16

Europe and Canada

Real GDP: Europe



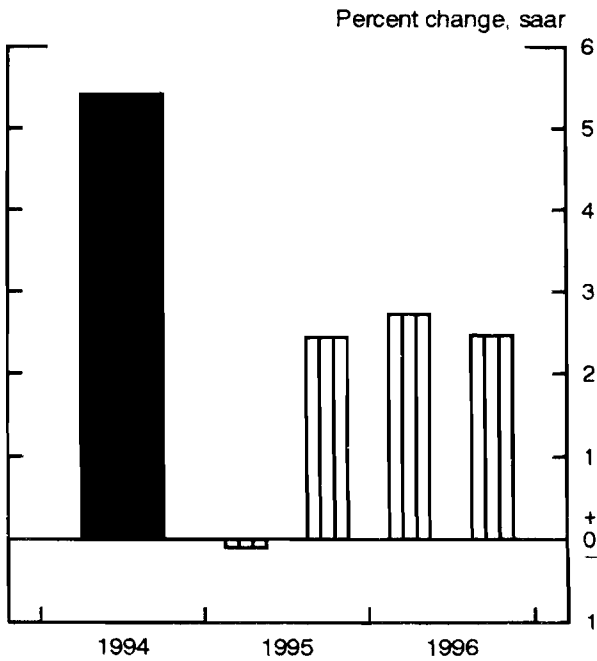
* Weighted by U.S. bilateral non-agricultural exports.

Exchange Rates – Trade Weighted*



* Multilateral trade weights.

Real GDP: Canada



Canadian Overnight Interest Rate

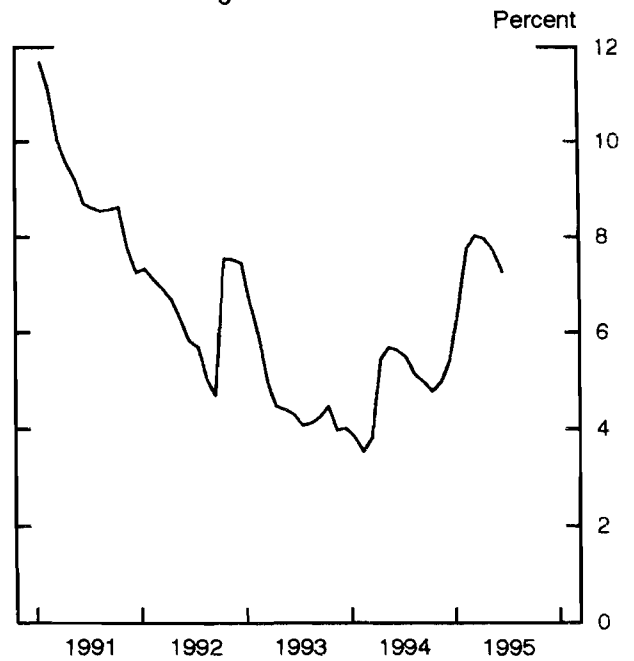
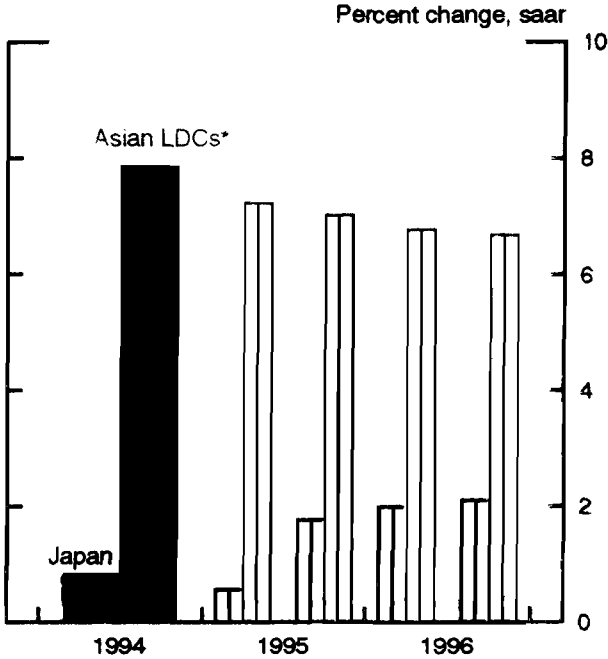


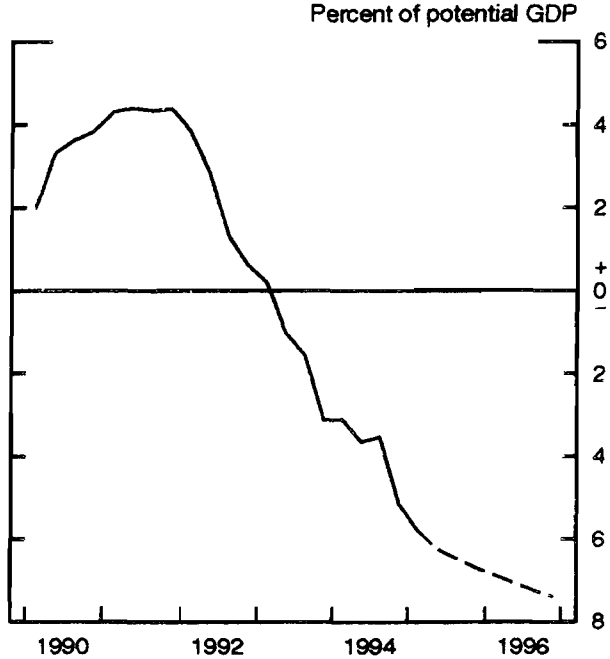
Chart 17

Japan

Real GDP: Japan and Asian LDCs

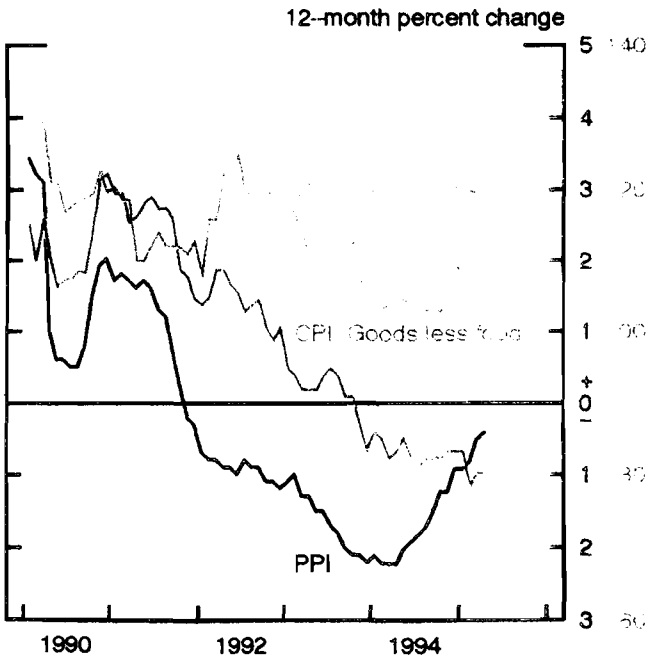


Output Gap



* Weighted by U.S. bilateral non-agricultural exports

Prices



Stock Market and Land Prices

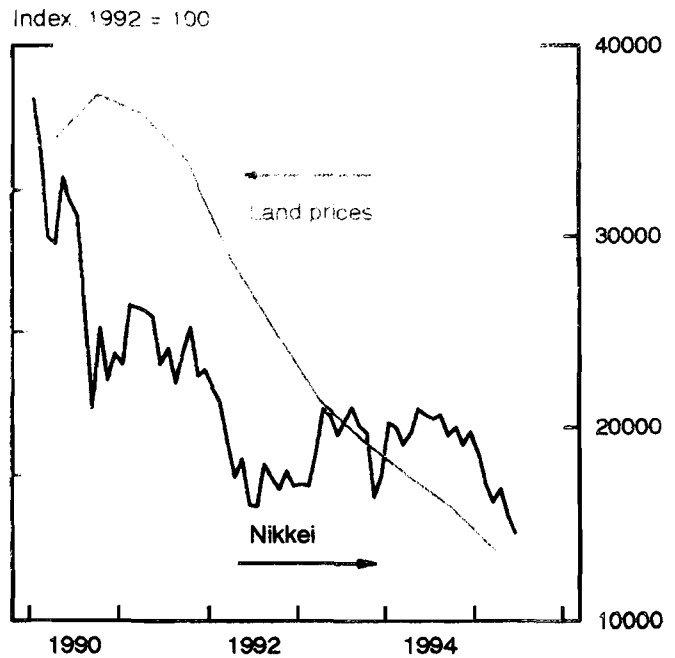


Chart 18

ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS FOR 1995

	FOMC		
	Range	Central Tendency	Staff
—————Percent change, Q4 to Q4—————			
Nominal GDP	$3\frac{3}{4}$ to 5	$4\frac{1}{4}$ to $4\frac{3}{4}$	4.1
previous estimate	$4\frac{3}{4}$ to $6\frac{1}{2}$	5 to 6	4.8
Real GDP	$1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3	$1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2	1.7
previous estimate	2 to $3\frac{1}{4}$	2 to 3	2.2
CPI	3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$	3 to $3\frac{1}{4}$	3.0
previous estimate	$2\frac{3}{4}$ to $3\frac{3}{4}$	3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$	2.9
—————Average level, Q4, percent—————			
Unemployment rate	$5\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{3}{4}$ to 6	6.0
previous estimate	$5\frac{1}{4}$ to 6	About $5\frac{1}{2}$	5.4

ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS FOR 1996

	FOMC		
	Range	Central Tendency	Staff
—————Percent change, Q4 to Q4—————			
Nominal GDP	$4\frac{1}{2}$ to 6	$4\frac{3}{4}$ to $5\frac{1}{2}$	4.5
Real GDP	2 to $3\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$	2.2
CPI	$2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$	2.9
—————Average level, Q4, percent—————			
Unemployment rate	$5\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{4}$	$5\frac{3}{4}$ to 6	6.1

NOTE: Central tendencies constructed by dropping top and bottom three from distribution, and rounding to nearest quarter percent.

July 6, 1995

Long-run Ranges
Donald L. Kohn

I will begin with a few points from the long-run scenario section of the bluebook. These exercises are, at best, only indicative of the potential outcomes, but they may be useful in illustrating general tendencies and results as you think about policy alternatives.

First, judging from the staff projections and model simulations, the current level of the federal funds rate is slightly restrictive, and will become more so in coming years as inflation decreases and additional fiscal restraint kicks in. This is evident in the small gap that opens up between potential and actual output this year in the baseline strategy, and in the decline in the funds rate in subsequent years required to keep the gap from getting wider. By the standards of past variations in the federal funds rate, the adjustment is not that large. Even under the easier strategy, which eliminates monetary restraint and also offsets fiscal policy, the funds rate moves down only to 4-3/4 percent, remaining well above the lowest levels reached in the recent period of sluggish expansion. Even if fiscal policy were somewhat less restrictive, reductions in the federal funds rate probably still would be needed, though when they might have to start would depend importantly on the behavior of the bond market, as Mr. Simpson illustrated.

Second, with the discussion of price-stability goals for monetary policy again coming to the fore, it may be useful to review the output losses that may be associated with that endeavor. The bluebook simulations, of course, embody the conventional accelerationist Phillips curve model, and calculations like these probably will be

used in any public debate about changing the goals of the Federal Reserve. In sum, the bluebook simulation that gets to the neighborhood of price stability shortly after the year 2000 requires 3 percentage point years of more unemployment than the path of output in the easier strategy that holds inflation at around its current level. To be sure, the model does not allow for a credibility effect of announcing and committing publicly to such a goal--that is, the sacrifice ratio does not depend on the strategy followed. But it is, in fact, difficult to find such a credibility effect empirically for the United States or other countries. The model also does not allow for favorable feedbacks of declining inflation on the level or trend in productivity. Using the very generous estimate of the Rudebusch-Wilcox paper, and phasing in the productivity gains as the disinflation occurs, the present value of the net output losses from disinflation is recovered by only a few years after virtual price stability is reached in 2000. Others have found favorable, but less extreme results for productivity gains; if the effect is about one-tenth the Rudebusch-Wilcox result, it would take about 19 years from now to recoup the cumulative lost output. Some researchers, of course, have been unable to pinpoint the size of any effect.

Third, the exercises subjecting the baseline forecast to supply and demand shocks remind us of the risks inherent in using a nominal federal funds rate as the policy instrument. When holding to a predetermined funds rate path in the face of such shocks, instabilities begin small, but ultimately gather increasing force as changes in inflation expectations feed back on real rates, which feed back on the economy and inflation. The equilibrium real rate may not change by a lot in response to a shock; the two illustrations in the bluebook

require adjustments of only 1/4 to 1/2 percentage point. Nonetheless, in the face of such a shock, to get the same inflation outcome by a given time, the lags in the effects of monetary policy mean that a much larger funds rate adjustment is needed initially than ultimately. Moreover, recognizing that the state of the world has changed will take a while, and the longer the needed adjustment is delayed, the larger is the required initial rate movement. This is the lesson from the United States in the late-1970s, and apparently from Japan in the mid-1990s.

At this meeting, you are faced with the task of reconsidering the annual ranges for money and debt for 1995 and setting provisional ranges for 1996. Staff projections and alternative ranges for 1995 are given in a table on page 12 of the bluebook. Overall credit flows have been a little stronger than anticipated early in the year, reflecting importantly the financing of inventory investment. Moreover, a remarkably high proportion of credit flows has gone through depositories, as borrowers continued to favor debt that was short-term or repriced frequently until the recent sharp decline in bond yields. As a consequence, although debt growth is only a little above the middle of its range, M3 is appreciably over the upper end of its range. With market rates coming down, and yields on M2 assets responding sluggishly as usual, savers have favored M2 assets, in effect helping to fund the re-intermediation of credit. M2, as a consequence, is running in the upper portion of its range.

Over the balance of this year, we see credit growth slowing some--bringing this measure to around the middle of its current range --and more of it being financed in longer-term markets. As a consequence, M3 growth should slow substantially, but not enough to put it within its current range. M2 growth on average over the second half

should look much like the first half, leaving this aggregate within its range. We are projecting that the very recent surge in M2 will taper off, partly as rates on money funds and other M2 assets come more into line with the lower market rates. Still, the possibility that M2 could run above its range, especially if the Committee eases the stance of policy in coming months, can't be ruled out.

Even so, only the M3 range would seem to require consideration of a possible adjustment at this meeting. The Committee could leave the range unchanged and simply state that a temporary surge in bank lending was expected to push actual growth above the range this year. However, the staff believes that the weakness in depository credit and M3 growth over the previous four years was the outlier. Until the thrift and bank crises of the late 1980s, M3 generally had grown at least as fast as M2, and with depository institutions now healthier, faster M3 growth relative to income and to M2 now seems a reasonable expectation. In this case, the Committee should consider adjusting its M3 range upward; an increase of 2 percentage points--to 2 to 6 percent--would seem to represent a reasonable relationship with the M2 range and to have a reasonable chance of being high enough to encompass M3 growth for the year. Such a decision could be explained as a technical adjustment to take account of the return to more normal patterns of intermediation and M3 velocity, without any implications for the thrust of monetary policy. Indeed, the February Humphrey-Hawkins Report warned that for these reasons, an increase in the 1995 M3 range might prove necessary.

Staff projections and alternative sets of ranges for 1996 are given on page 17 of the bluebook. Under the interest rates and nominal income of the Greenbook forecast, we would expect in 1996 basically a continuation of the trends of the second half of this year.

M2 growth would come in a little higher in 1996 than in 1995, buoyed in part by a strengthening in nominal income and the assumed drop in interest rates next year, while debt and M3 would slow further; M3 would still remain strong by the standards of earlier in the 1990s as depositories continue to capture a substantial share of total lending.

In Julys of recent years, the Committee generally has chosen simply to carryover whatever ranges it has chosen for the current year as provisional ranges for the next year. This has been attractive because of the uncertainties about evolving money-income relationships, and because the ranges were already low enough that there was no scope to lower them further to send a message about the Committee's intent to seek price stability over time. Given the staff projections, this strategy would certainly work for 1996, especially if you chose to adjust the M3 range higher for 1995.

You may have noticed that the staff discussion and forecast of broad money and credit was a little more straightforward than in most bluebooks over recent years--that is, there were fewer mentions of persistent shifts in asset demands and special factors. This raises two questions: Is the targeting exercise more meaningful? Even if relying on target ranges is still dubious, is the behavior of the aggregates conveying any useful information about the underlying economic situation?

To be sure the growth of M2 has come much more in line with results from traditional specifications of its demand over the last two years as the lure of bond mutual funds faded with the backup in market rates last year. However, the level of this aggregate remains well below that predicted by these specifications, and M2 growth in the second quarter was appreciably in excess of the prediction of the standard model. This latter miss likely reflects the unusual behavior

of intermediate- and long-term rates; the standard model proxies the returns on alternative assets with a three-month Treasury bill rate-- not a good choice when long- and short-term rates fail to move in their traditional alignment. These results suggest that our understanding of M2 demand is still fragile. The recent experience may suggest a greater sensitivity of M2 demand to long-term rates, and associated changes in its cyclical performance. In other words, it seems too early to tell whether we're back on a well-specified and useful demand curve. Even if we are, it is well to remember that the monetary aggregates, even in their well-behaved episodes--provided only rough guideposts for policy, and had to be interpreted in the context of a broad array of other information in the economy. It was the Committee's frustration with trying to make sense out of annual growth ranges for M2 that led to the P* exercise, which looked to signals from the longer-term trends in M2.

Nonetheless, the turnaround in broad money and the pickup in private and total debt growth this year may be indicative of the substantial easing of financial conditions that have occurred this year through movements in market interest rates. Credit is flowing freely and the liquid assets of the public are rising rapidly. These circumstances do not seem to suggest unusual or severe financial constraints on spending.

The exceptions to this picture of relative strength in flows are M1, reserves, and the monetary base. It is true that we're having to withdraw reserves to keep the funds rate where it is. In the last month this has been a result of the bookkeeping of banks, who have instituted NOW account sweeps to reduce the reserve requirement tax. But we were draining reserves earlier this year as well. At the configuration of interest rates and income flows in the first half,

people don't want to hold as much M1. This has been largely a function of the lagged effects of the rise in interest rates last year. We expect these effects to abate; without sweeps we would see some growth in M1 and reserves last month and going forward--but very slow.

More fundamentally, deregulation and changes in payment technologies have eroded the differences between transactions and nontransaction assets, making M1 demand more dependent on interest rate relationships. As a consequence, growth of this aggregate now swings over a wider range and its velocity varies more than before for the same changes in short-term interest rates; in other words, you can't judge underlying financial conditions using standards for M1 growth derived from the 1960s and 1970s. The extraordinarily rapid expansion of M1 in 1992 and 1993 went along with a decision to go to, and stay with, what seemed by other measures a moderately expansionary policy--less expansionary than in many recessions--that the FOMC judged appropriate to the circumstances. Slow growth and contraction of M1 in 1994 and 1995 does appear consistent with the move to modestly restrictive stance of policy. The question is whether that stance is appropriate to the current circumstances--but the Chairman will quickly remind me that that's the subject of another part of the meeting.

July 6, 1995

Short-run Policy
Donald L. Kohn

As noted in the discussion of long-run scenarios, policy may well be positioned a bit to the restrictive side at this point. This can be seen not only in the results of the staff forecast and model baseline simulation with its downward tilt to inflation, but also in the level of the real federal funds rate relative to its historical averages, in the read outs from various "policy rules" keyed to output and inflation or nominal GDP--which tend to produce federal funds rates below 6 percent--and even perhaps in the behavior of the monetary aggregates--at least the narrower ones. Especially if federal deficit reduction unfolds along anything like the path assumed by the staff, a decrease in nominal and real funds rates would seem to be needed at some point over the next few years, unless the Committee were intent on making considerable progress toward price stability.

Implied in the staff forecast and the alternative scenarios is that the current funds rate is about 1/2 to 3/4 of a percentage point above its natural rate--though this is undoubtedly putting too fine a point on an ambiguous measure. Nonetheless, this estimate does seem to be consistent with readings from financial markets. Those markets have built in an easing by year-end of something like this magnitude. Judging from the stock market, a decline of this size is seen as sufficient to foster the earnings growth that would be associated with continued good economic expansion. As Peter noted, markets do see some possibility of ease at this meeting, and no action could be associated with a modest edging up in rates. Over a longer

stretch, a failure to ratify the expected decline would cause longer-term rates to back up more, at least in real terms, reversing some, but by no means a large portion, of the downward movement registered since last winter.

But that backing up helps to keep the disinflation process going in the staff forecast. Market expectations for inflation are at best difficult to read, but the overall term structure of interest rates retains an appreciable upward tilt, and many outside forecasts as well as survey results seem to suggest widespread expectations for flat or even slightly higher inflation over coming years. An argument for maintaining the current stance of policy would be that in building in rate declines, the market has misread your intentions for inflation; keeping the funds rate unchanged at this time increases the odds on some disinflation and would send another signal to markets that the Federal Reserve takes seriously its stated goal of making progress toward price stability over time.

Keeping policy unchanged might also be preferred if the Committee saw appreciable odds on upside risk to the staff forecast, say from the drop in market interest rates this year. To be sure, that decline can be seen as largely an endogenous response to a weaker-than-expected economy. But markets may have over-reacted, especially since they may have been encouraged by some exogenous factors, including various testimonies and other public pronouncements from the Federal Reserve, as well as by firmer expectations of further fiscal consolidation that is not yet assured. With markets unlikely to respond strongly to an unchanged funds rate, and with the most recent data perhaps ameliorating concerns about the extent of the downward

impetus to the economy, the Committee might view the costs as relatively small of awaiting additional information to judge the depth and persistence of the current slowdown and the response of aggregate demand to the more accommodative financial market conditions now in place.

Nonetheless, although inflation may not be on a downward track in the eyes of outside observers, it also is much less likely to strengthen than it seemed to be when the Committee last tightened--and this improvement in the inflation outlook may argue for a near-term adjustment in the stance of policy. In retrospect, the tightening last February perhaps can be viewed as an insurance policy against building inflation pressures, which is less needed now. The slowing in the economy since then has been considerably more pronounced than anticipated, and the staff as well as many others have revised down expected inflation while also lowering the expected path for the federal funds rate. Committee members themselves have reduced projected growth for 1995 by almost a percentage point, and increased the anticipated unemployment rate at the end of the year to somewhere in the vicinity of the natural rate. With pressures on resources lessened, the risk of accelerating inflation would seem to have been greatly reduced, and the Committee might be able to decrease the degree of monetary restraint at least a little without risking adverse movements in actual or expected inflation.

An inclination in this regard would be reinforced to the extent the Committee did not place a high priority on fostering a continuing reduction in inflation rates in the immediate future. A number of you have expressed a preference over the years for a

strategy that would attain price stability over time by leaning particularly hard against upticks in inflation to cap the rate at lower levels in each cyclical expansion--that is, an asymmetrical reaction function. Inherent in this strategy is not necessarily seeking deliberately to impose a persistent output gap, especially once inflation had stabilized around low levels. If the Committee were to follow this strategy, with the economy now moving into line with its potential, it would seem at this time to call for a more neutral policy. Such a policy adjustment would better assure that the economy grew along its potential in 1996.

Easing at this time, to be sure, would increase the odds on needing to reverse course once again later this year. If the Committee saw the chances of this occurring as quite large--that is, if you didn't think the federal funds rate was fundamentally too high--easing and then tightening just to react to incoming data would seem to risk unnecessarily confusing the markets about your intentions and your assessment of the current situation. But easing because you thought rates were in fact basically too high, and being prepared later to reverse should data come in to cause you to revise your assessment, would seem entirely appropriate and, in the event, readily explainable in the context of that new information. In particular, if you were concerned that the balance of risks was tilted toward a weaker economy, that it might take time to recognize developing adverse shocks, and that timely adjustments to policy might in these circumstances be difficult, some easing now might help to avoid the pitfalls of holding fixed the nominal funds rate in the face of shifts in supply or demand.

If a forward-looking monetary policy is successful in damping the amplitude of cycles in business activity and in interest rates, "mid-course corrections" of relatively small size may become more common. But so far monetary policy has tended to move in one direction in relatively long sequences, and, as a consequence, markets are likely to project further rate reductions following any easing action. Market reactions may be shaped by the words you use to describe and explain the action--in today's announcement and in the Humphrey-Hawkins testimony--but only to a limited extent. Instead markets are likely to read the action itself quite closely. In that regard, a 50 basis point cut in the funds rate might be seen as connoting that the Federal Reserve saw significant risks to economic expansion and current short-term rates as appreciably above appropriate levels. The resulting significant reduction in real interest rates would be desirable if the Committee indeed saw the situation in that light.

A 25 basis point cut would leave also a distinct impression that more was coming, perhaps even more promptly, promoting speculation almost immediately on when. Still, the market reaction might well be smaller than with 50 basis points. Unlike February 1994, a policy reversal at this meeting would not be occurring in the context of public statements and analysis that appreciable further changes in rates were likely to be necessary to achieve the System's objectives.