

Washington Comments

Washington—The outlook now is for good business throughout the year and well into 1956. By the time you read this some automobile or truck manufacturer will have produced the 5,000,000th car or truck built in 1955. This stage of production was reached in October of last year.

Predictions for this year were for production of 5,500,000 cars and trucks, or possibly 6,000,000. It now appears certain that these figures will be reached and surpassed.

New cars, however, will probably be introduced much earlier this year than in recent years. Instead of November, December, and even January and February, the new models will probably hit the advertising pages in early fall this year.

With this probability, it might not be surprising if total new car and truck sales for the year lap at 7,000,000—or thereabouts—or even more by the end of the calendar year. Production would run higher than that of course.

Record sales this year—and good business in other lines—is indicated by a combination of factors. First come the increases voted by Congress to millions of government workers and armed servicemen. This increase in pay is sure to be translated into more buying power.

Recent union-management contracts also provide huge pay raises (in total dollars) to labor. U. S. Steel workers, for example, are to get an added fifteen cents an hour. That increases earnings by over a dollar a day to the forty-hour workers. It gives him enough extra cash to buy another appliance, or even an automobile, on the installment plan.

Government workers and servicemen, too, are getting increases

which enable them to buy more. Anything which doesn't cost much over \$30 or \$25 a month can be purchased by millions of Americans on increases in pay they have received in recent months and weeks.

In time the price tags on many goods will have to be adjusted upward, because some of the materials and the cost of labor in producing these items, have gone up. If taxes are reduced next year on such large items as automobiles, then the increased manufacturer's price can probably be more than offset by lower taxes.

If taxes are not reduced, the administration is going to have a hard time holding down the cost of living—which has been so stable in recent months. In fact, the immediate threat to the economy looks to be one of threatened inflation, brought on by pay increases and the resulting increase in such items as steel.

The time to watch for price increases in automobiles is in fall announcements of new cars. Several new, very expensive models are almost ready to be announced right now.

The Lincoln division of the Ford Motor Company is about ready to bring out a model of the popular Continental—discontinued some years back to the dismay of Continental admirers. Cadillac will produce a new car that sells for as much or more, than the Continental.

These cars, which are expected to sell above \$7,000—according to

reports, will consume any extra money that motorists feel heavy on their hands. Packard already has several expensive models, like the Caribbean, selling at such figures and Chrysler and Imperial get into this act also.

The whole expectation, then, in business circles is for another year of good business. The summer slump hasn't yet put in an appearance and many now think it will not be seen in 1955. Crops appear to be good, pay raises are a fact, and business continues to prosper, with a lack of government interference.

That adds up to a bright prospect.

Carolina Low In Average Salary

Raleigh—North Carolina ranked at the bottom of the nation last year in the average weekly earnings of its manufacturing employees.

Furthermore, the rate of increase in total and hourly earnings during the last five years was lower in North Carolina than in any other state.

Based on U. S. Department of Labor figures, these and other conclusions were published in the North Carolina Research Institute's latest bulletin, North Carolina Facts.

According to the bulletin, average weekly earnings of North Carolina's production workers during 1954 were \$47.88. This was two-thirds of the national average of \$71.86 per week. Michigan led with average weekly earnings of \$87.84. Arkansas tied.

North Carolina tied with Arkansas for 47th place in average hourly earnings with \$1.25. Mississippi was 48th.

The average work week in North Carolina was 38.3 hours compared with 39.7 for the nation as a whole.

Between 1949 and 1954 total average earnings in North Carolina increased from \$39.90 to \$47.80, or 20 per cent. Every other state had a greater percentage increase, with the average 31 per cent.

North Carolina never before had been the lowest state in the average weekly pay scale, although it ranked 47th in 1953.

Clement Ahead For Party Post

Washington, July 10 — Kentucky's quiet-spoken Earle C. Clements appears to have marshaled solid Democratic backing in his role of substitute for Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas.

Johnson, who was stricken with a heart attack on July 2, may be out of action for several months. His doctors have suggested the possibility they will oppose his resuming the arduous duties they blame for his illness.

If the time should come that Johnson decides he cannot carry on in the leadership post, Clements seems likely to be promoted from acting to a full-fledged status.

Talks with individual Democrats representing all elements of the party—from self-styled "liberal" to deeply dyed conservative—yielded praise for Clements and forecasts that he would be chosen

leader if Johnson quits the job. Clements, who makes friends quietly, seems to have made a lot

of them in the Senate. DEMOCRAT ADS PAY A new insecticide more deadly than DDT is patented.

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Passenger Cars In Fatal Crashes

Passenger cars were involved in the lion's share of last year's fatal motor accidents, the Motor Vehicles Department at Raleigh reports. Of the 1,163 vehicles involved in fatal accidents 925 were passenger cars, 122 trucks, 41 truck-tractor and semi-trailer, 14 motorcycles, 13 buses, and eight farm tractors plus miscellaneous vehicles. During the year there were also 118 military vehicles in accidents including one fatal crash.

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