

Experts see economic upturn

The nation's economy is in the early stages of what appears to be a solid recovery from recession, according to Alan Greenspan, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Greenspan, in an Associated Press report, also predicted that unemployment could be lower this year than first thought, adding that interest rates on home mortgages will decline if inflation remains in check.

"The potential for having a recovery that will last quite a long time is there," Greenspan said at a breakfast meeting with reporters. "Excluding the danger of inflation, this looks like a very solid recovery."

"It is reasonably clear what the pattern will be," agrees Ray Mikesell, economics professor at the University. Mikesell foresees some reduction in unemployment and inflation, but not to an acceptable level.

"The recovery depends on several factors," Mikesell explained. He named the federal budget, wage increases, the price of oil and crop developments as important ones. Domestic fiscal and monetary policy will influence the rate of inflation, he said.

Mikesell pointed to the stock market as another indication of economic recovery. He attributed the recent rise to increased corporate profits, declining interest rates, and the expectation that interest rates will continue to decline. Because major corporations borrow money heavily, interest rates are a pivotal factor to the stock market as well as the entire economy.

"Beyond early 1977 the picture gets blurred," Mikesell says. We might not repeat the economic patterns of the past, he warns. "We've never had this kind of inflation-recession before. Who knows what will happen?"

Pot said less dangerous

WASHINGTON (AP)—Marijuana is less of a public health problem than alcohol and cigarettes but pot smoking can be a "clear and present danger" when driving a car, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse said Thursday.

Dr. Robert DuPont told a news conference that his agency's fifth annual "Marijuana and Health" report to Congress, while failing to give marijuana a clean bill of health, also did not support earlier concerns about possible permanent biological damage.

DuPont said his personal advice to young people is to avoid marijuana, cigarettes and alcohol but, realizing prohibition would be fruitless, he favors replacing jail terms with "modest" \$25 fines for possessing small amounts of the drug.

Although each of the three recreational drugs has its distinctive health risks, he said, marijuana is clearly the least dangerous when used responsibly.

"There is no question that alcohol and tobacco are causing us more health problems than marijuana," DuPont said.

"Alcohol really does kill people from overdoses. It is virtually impossible to die from marijuana," he said.

"At current use levels," DuPont added, "obviously cigarettes are causing a greater health problem than marijuana."

Cigarettes are associated with lung cancer and other respiratory and heart diseases, but marijuana

does not cause bronchitis except among very heavy users," he said.

DuPont said the problem is that marijuana and alcohol often are used together, especially among youths, and that pot smokers apparently have difficulty in limiting their consumption.

DuPont said that 33.6 million Americans have tried marijuana and 13.3 million use it regularly.

Marijuana is just one link in the chain of progressive drug use, beginning with beer and wine, then moving up to cigarettes or hard liquor, marijuana, other illegal drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates and tranquilizers, and then the hard drugs including heroin, he said.

Not all drug users move all the way up that chain, he emphasized, but those who do and then give up go back down the same steps.

DuPont said it is normal for children to experiment and that parents should not "get so uptight" when their youngsters try liquor, cigarettes or marijuana a few times.

To youngsters, he said, "My advice is if they're not using the three, don't take it up. It's expensive, it's messy and there are health risks associated with all these drugs."

Failing that, "use them as little as possible and as responsibly as possible," he said. "If it was up to me, I would stop use of all these drugs at the wave of my hand."

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