

inter/national news

From Associated Press reports

Timber aid unsure, says head forester

PORTLAND

The man who heads the U.S. Forest Service said here Wednesday that he's not sure his agency should take any further steps to help the ailing wood products industry in the Pacific Northwest.

R. Max Peterson told a news conference that the Forest Service should be careful not to take any action that might make the situation worse.

Peterson said that Norm Gould, director of timber management for the Forest Service, had spent several weeks in Oregon and Washington studying the problem.

He said the agency would decide in a few weeks whether to seek more authority to ease the problems faced by purchasers of national forest timber.

The Forest Service already has decided to grant selective three-year extensions on some existing timber sales contracts. Extensions were granted due to high prices bid on the sales several years ago and the current poor market conditions.

Timber sale prices are extremely high because of high bids when the contracts were sold several years ago. The bids were made on the assumption of continuing high inflation and corresponding increases in prices.

But wood products prices have fallen and there is no way for many timber companies to break even on many existing sales.

Inflation level dips to 7 percent

WASHINGTON

Analysts predicted Wednesday that inflation at the wholesale level would close out the year at around 7 percent, the slowest rate of increase since 1977, after the government reported November's increase at a moderate 6.3 percent annual pace.

That marked the eighth consecutive month that inflation at the wholesale level held beneath double digits. One independent economist called it "very good news" which signals that "we're on a new plateau."

The Labor Department's official barometer — the Producer Price Index for finished goods — went up a seasonally adjusted 0.5 percent in November, compared with the 0.6 percent advance in October.

Hijack drama ends in Beirut

BEIRUT, Lebanon

A 52-hour hijack drama in which Lebanese Moslem militants seized a Libyan jetliner and forced it to fly to four countries on a 7,500-mile odyssey ended early Thursday, Lebanon state radio reported. The radio had said earlier that an agreement had been struck under which the hijackers would give up and their 35 hostages would be freed.

The officials, who declined to be identified, said the hijackers who seized control of the plane on a flight from Switzerland to Libya on Monday gave themselves up to authorities at 12:30 a.m. (5:30 p.m. EST). It was not immediately known what happened to the sky pirates after their surrender.

They said the hijackers surrendered to Syrian peace-keeping troops, who have been in Lebanon since the 1975-76 civil war.

Lebanese state radio reported that the aircraft was being readied for takeoff to Larnaca, Cyprus, as part of an agreement to end the hijack drama. It said some of the passengers chose to remain in Beirut and two buses were sent to the plane to collect them.

Federal jobs open to air controllers

WASHINGTON

Pres. Reagan, citing a "tradition that individuals deserve to be treated with compassion," opened the door Wednesday for 11,500 fired air traffic controllers to again seek federal jobs — but not in the flight towers.

"I do not believe that those who forfeited their jobs as controllers should be foreclosed from other federal employment," Reagan said as he lifted a three-month federal hiring ban against the controllers who launched an illegal strike last August.

Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis told reporters that none of the dismissed 11,500 individuals would be accepted at the Federal Aviation Administration, where they previously worked.

He acknowledged, ironically,

that some of the fired workers eventually might work as military controllers. The FAA has picked up some of the slack in its depleted work force by borrowing from the military.

Sakharov ends his hunger strike

MOSCOW

The Soviet KGB secret police told the daughter-in-law of Andrei Sakharov on Wednesday the Nobel laureate had ended his 17-day hunger strike in exile and that she would be allowed to go to the United States to join her husband.

Liza Alexeyeva, 26, said she was summoned to KGB headquarters Wednesday afternoon and was told that Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, halted their hunger strike after being informed permission had been granted for her to emigrate.

The Sakharovs began the fast Nov. 22 in Gorky to protest Soviet refusal to allow Alexeyeva to leave the country.

The Soviets announced Friday that the Sakharovs had been hospitalized to safeguard their health.

House approves gas pipeline bill

WASHINGTON

The House approved 233 to 173 on Wednesday a bill which hands industry the authority to start billing consumers for a yet unbuilt \$43-billion pipeline to bring Alaska natural gas to the lower 48 states, the largest private construction project in history.

But the measure, already passed by the Senate, still faced an obstacle before going to the White House. A Senate opponent threatened to filibuster the usual formality of putting the House measure under the Senate bill's title, even though both bills are identical.

The legislative package waives existing antitrust and pricing laws to allow consumers to be billed for the pipeline before it is completed, a step which industry says is critical to attracting the massive capital needed for construction. The line would virtually dwarf the existing trans-Alaska oil pipeline.



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