

REYNOLDS KNIGHT

Consumer Helped to Make 1955 Biggest Boom Year in History

Statisticians are starting to add up the figures that will show 1955 to have been the greatest year, in production and income, in the history of the United States.

From the lofty national viewpoint, the gross national product will turn out to have reached the neighborhood of 385 billion dollars, perhaps a shade more. Total personal income will be around 300 billion dollars. The Federal Reserve index of production reached a high around 143. (That's in percentage of the 1947-49 average).

Production of steel, basic material of our civilization, was certain to cross the 116.5-million-ton mark. The previous annual high, set in 1953, was surpassed on Dec. 17.

Eight million automobiles and trucks were going into the record books, unless the Christmas-to-New-Year's week showed an unexpected slump. The December 17 mark there was 7,700,000 vehicles.

The records were set without the stimulus of growing govern-

ment expenditures. While farm price supports, housing loan guarantees, and similar programs did put public credit behind private ventures, actual government expenditures remained level during 1955 at the point where they had leveled off early in 1954.

The consumer did it with his little pay check.

NEW SPEEDSTER—A new supersonic fighter-bomber, "capable of delivering nuclear weapons as well as heavier loads of conventional bombs and rockets, at extremely high speeds over long ranges," has appeared on the scene.

The quoted phrases are the Air Force's description of the new Republic F-105A, just delivered by Republic Aviation Corp. for flight-testing. On its first flight the F-105A exceeded the speed of sound (760 miles an hour at sea level).

About a dozen such flights were made at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. "Rusty" Roth, Republic's chief test pilot, said

after the first flight: "Gentle, it was a very fine ride."

The Air Force released these details on the F-105A: It is equipped with a Pratt and Whitney J-57 turbojet engine developing 10,000 pounds of thrust without afterburner. It has short, very thin sweptback wings and a long cylindrical fuselage. Air intakes for the engines are in the wings, so that radar equipment can be installed in the needle nose of the plane.

THINGS TO COME—A do-it-yourself accordion door, of heavy vinyl plastic, is offered by a leading maker of window shades. . . . An after-shave lotion that leaves its user with a sun-tanned look is on the market. . . . Decorative iron railings come pre-packaged in three-to-four-foot lengths, adjustable to the slope of your steps. . . . Gold-finished automobile wheel covers can be had to snap on over your present ones.

A NEW TWIST—The pres-

firm recently invited thousands of people to call him collect and let him know what they thought of his products and advertising, in a refreshing new variation of "opinion sampling."

Newton Kook, president of a distillery, wanted to know how consumers in upper New York State felt about J. W. Dant whiskies and the company's personalized advertising campaign, so he ran big ads in Buffalo newspapers asking readers in that heavily populated region to telephone him—collect—at his office in Louisville, Ky., and give him their honest opinions.

The response to the ad was excellent: Kook talked personally to 112 callers over a four-hour period and a staff of ten expert long distance operators handled hundreds of additional calls and noted reactions. Every caller received his choice of a pound fruitcake flavored with Dant bourbon, a Kentucky cologne string tie, or a trick rubber dollar symbolizing the "stretch" of the consumer dollar when it's spent for his product, the na-

tion's top-selling bonded whiskey.

The conversational executive was so pleased with the results of his sampling that he plans to repeat the performance very soon in several other cities, including New York, Oakland, Jacksonville, Baton Rouge and Little Rock.

BIGGER BITES, MAYBE—Cocoa beans sold at 32 cents a pound in the New York commodity market a week or so ago. That's less than half the 72-cent peak reached in the summer of 1954. Consequently, demand has been increasing.

When it seemed as if cocoa beans, chief ingredient of this country's immensely popular candy bars, were in the high-price range to stay, candy mak-

ers reluctantly cut down on the size of their nickel candy bars, and increased wholesale prices until most nickel bars really sell for six cents apiece. Some made the jump to dime bars altogether.

Now that the price is down, and cocoa grindings have been moving up for six months, importers of the bean are hoping that candy bars will get bigger again. Candy people themselves say the cost is still not low by historic standards, and that it's a costly and time-consuming

chore to make new molds and adjust machinery.

BITS O' BUSINESS—In third-quarter 1955 inventory markups were adding to apparent industrial profits at a \$2.6 billion annual rate, says the Department of Commerce. . . . 128,112 new businesses were incorporated in the United States in the first 31 months of this year, Dun & Bradstreet reported.

FINANCIAL STATUS

An average family today has twice as much life insurance as it had 25 years ago, and at least four times as much in personal savings, according to government estimates.

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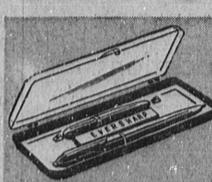
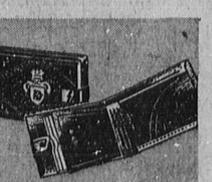
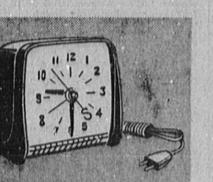
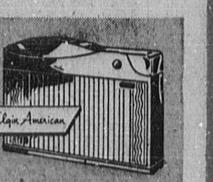
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All offices will be open until 12 Noon, Saturday, January 7, 1956