

## Our Changing Economy

# 'Big Ticket' Items In Less Demand

By Philip Stoddard Brown

**I**N SEPTEMBER, people in Washington spent freely for clothing and other "soft goods," but not so freely for new cars and major household appliances.

Only 4800 new cars were sold, 44% fewer than in September,



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1955, and less than in any month in the past two years. This low figure for the metropolitan area comes at the tag end of the 1956 model year. Dealers' stocks are not nearly as large as they were a year ago; the "cleanup drive" has not been as aggressive and discounts from list prices have been smaller. Perhaps, too, the market was "oversold" last year; perhaps stricter credit terms played a part; perhaps people were less attracted by the styling of '56 cars. Whatever the reasons, it is a fact that sales since February have been running well below those of last year, as the accompanying chart shows.

Except for radios, automatic clothes washers and freezers, fewer units of all the major electric household appliances were sold in September '56 than in September '55.

As in the case of new cars, the decline in sales has been apparent for many months. It is especially significant that fewer big-volume, expensive items, such as refrigerators, TV

"big-ticket" merchandise at a time when employment and personal income were higher than ever before.

This is the second of a series of monthly articles on the Washington economy by Philip Stoddard Brown, economic writer and editorial consultant.

sets and air conditioners, have been sold this year than last.

One should bear in mind that sales were very high last year. Surely the sale of 60,000 TV sets in nine months of this year, though less than last year, is still impressive. Never-

### \*ELECTRIC APPLIANCE SALES

(9 Months 1956 vs. Same 1955 Period)	
Dehumidifiers	196%
Vacuum cleaners	31
Dishwashers	31
Radios (all types)	13
Food waste disposers	8
Freezers	2
Washing machines (conventional)	4
Washers (automatic)	5
Television sets	6
Ranges	11
Clothes dryers	11
Refrigerators	17
Room air-conditioners	19
Irons	23
Water heaters	28

\*In area served by Pepco.

theless, it is noteworthy that people in Washington have curtailed a little their buying of

