

By Philip Stoddard Brown

THE aggregate income of Washington residents is higher than it was a year ago but spending, as nearly as can be estimated, has been a little less this autumn. Nevertheless, it will be surprising if Christmas trade falls short of last year.



People in Washington have greater job security than at many times in the past and many can look forward to pay boosts during the coming year. Some 20,000 laborers, mechanics and other blue-collar Government workers will get a pay raise of 13 cents an hour, on the average, in early December. This will add over \$100,000 a week to area payrolls. Some 7000 persons in commercial printing firms and in the Government Printing Office are likely to get pay increases as a result of negotiations now in progress. Other groups in the private sector can surely look forward to wage-increases in 1957, and

there is said to be a good chance that Congress will enact a general pay increase for its white-collar employees. After Christmas, comes Inauguration, which will bring a lot of people to Washington at a time when trade is usually slack.

The Christmas Trade

THE degree to which retail selling is stepped up in December for certain types of stores is indicated by the accompanying chart, based on last year's sales in all U.S.A. (Figures for the Washington area, if available, would be much the same, presumably.) Men's clothing stores do over a sixth of their annual business in this month, and Christmas sales are even more important to leather goods and toy stores. Building-supply dealers are among the very few retailers that do less than a twelfth of their annual business in December. New-car sales in December have varied from 6.1 per cent of total sales in 1951 to 11.4 per cent in 1954. This year, auto dealers are confident of a big month. Most of them will be able to sell cars as fast as they arrive from the factories, and most assembly plants are in full production, six days a week. It is a seller's market, at the moment, as evidenced by the order backlog of many dealers, and by the fact that many new cars are being sold at or near list prices. Used cars, too, are in good demand and prices are higher than a year ago. Over 70 per cent of new cars sold in the Washington area in October were registered in Maryland and Virginia. This is in contrast to 1950, when only 57 per cent of the area's new-car registrations were outside the District. No figures exist to show where Maryland and Virginia residents buy their cars and whether the older District dealers are faring better or worse than newly franchised suburban dealers.

Buying the Invisible

RESIDENTIAL use of gas in October '56 was 18 per cent greater than in October '55; use of electricity was 12 per cent greater. These gains (in physical units) were almost the same in prior months. The increased use of telephone service, also shown in the table headed *Economic Indicators*, is, in a way, even more remarkable because it reflects only calls made in the District, where population and employment has changed very little in the past year. The increased number and use of appliances largely explains the greater consumption of gas and electricity, but what exactly has caused so great a gain in the use of telephone service?

Hidden Growth

ONE AREA of busines activity that has grown rapidly in recent years is that of news-gathering and magazine publishing. This growth is partly hidden, statistically. Many of those engaged in writing, editing and preparing promotional material are employed by trade associations, trade unions, educational organizations, the wire services and out-of-town newspapers. But even apart from the many people so excluded, 11,200 persons are employed by printing and publishing firms in Washington, according to a study by the Board of Trade. Perhaps several hundred should be added to allow for employment in small printing establishments not covered by this survey. Another 10,200 are employed in the Government Printing Office and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Over 300 periodicals are published in Washington. Many of these—Nation's Business, Changing Times, U. S. News and World Report and others—are printed elsewhere. But a good many, including some of those with largest circulations, are printed in the District.

BY FAR the biggest of those printed locally is the National Geographic magazine. This printing job, because of its size and complexity, is one of the most formidable in the magazine field. To handle it, Judd and Detweiler have installed enormously expensive color presses and other costly equipment. Some of the other periodicals are small only by comparison with the National Geographic. American Rifleman, for example, runs about 100 pages and nearly 300,000 copies per issue. The Machinists' Journal of nearly 50 pages goes to 900,000 members. The circulation of these and a few other locally printed magazines is shown below.

	Approx. Circulation
National Geographic (monthly)	2,160,000
American Rifleman (monthly)	290,000
Leatherneck (Marine Corps monthly)	119,000
Machinists' Monthly Journal	900,000
United Mine Workers' Journal (semi-monthly)	400,000
Junior Red Cross News (monthly)	535,000
National Jewish Monthly	184,000
Life & Health (monthly)	185,000

Printed in the District

By and large, there is very little book printing in Washington. There is no cloth bindery equipped to handle large editions. Wage scales are higher than in many other cities and, since the time factor is not so important in this type of work, the cost factor tends to dominate. Likewise, a lot of flat-press printing of legal briefs, pamphlets and forms is sent out of town. One firm is engaged solely in the brokerage function of farming out work to printers in Baltimore, Richmond, Fredericksburg, York and Gettysburg. Even some of the typesetting for local printing is done in Baltimore.

