Beans, sugar, rice lead price increase

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WASHINGTON — One of the demoralizing things about inflation, government statistics show, is that the price of things people tend to need most tends to go up most.

From 1967 to the present, the two items which have increased most in price are dried beans (up 318 per cent), potatoes (178 per cent), sugar (178 per cent), rice (145 per cent), and home heating oil (118 per cent).

That 175 per cent increase in sugar is a little misleading; sugar prices have gone down at times over the years, but have risen 200 per cent in the last year.

The five items charted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics which have shown the least increases are TV repair for picture tube replacement (up 1.6 per cent), radios (2.1 per cent), bank checking accounts (3.1 per cent), aerosol deodorants (3.7 per cent) and prescription tranquilizers (4.5 per cent).

A compilation of 1967-74 price changes made by the United States League of Savings Associations showed seven items which have actually declined in price:

- Anti-infective prescription drugs (down 31 per cent).
- Movie cameras (8 per cent).
- Nylon hose and pantyhose (7.8 per cent).
- Hormones (5 per cent).
- Portable tape recorders (10.6 per cent).
- Multiple vitamin concentrates (2.4 per cent).
- Portable TV sets (1.1 per cent).

The list shows these other prices increased over the last seven years:

- Grapes, 118 per cent.
- Fish, 116 per cent.
- Semiprivate hospital room, 103 per cent.
- Canned sardines, 97 per cent.
- Vase-cut tulips, 96 per cent.
- Margarine, 94.5 per cent.
- Interior painting work, 93 per cent.
- Chocolate bar, 92 per cent.
- Apples, 89 per cent.
- Green peppers, 88 per cent.
- Spinach, 78 per cent.
- Toilet soap, 78 per cent.
- Furnace repair, 77 per cent.

Other changes show shaving cream up 10.5 per cent; whisky up 10.5 per cent; home permanent wave sets up 12.3 per cent; and broadloom carpeting up 12.7 per cent.

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GWU says gains reflect change from earlier losses

When a corporation that has been losing money begins showing a profit, the net income gain consequently becomes a near-astronomical figure.

Such was the case last week when Great Western United Corp. reported after-tax profit for a four-month period had jumped twelvefold.

The explanation was offered this morning by Eleanor Buffing, director of corporate communications for the Denver-based corporation.

The prime reason for the improved profit picture involves increased prices being paid for sugar on the world market, although the GWU-owned Great Western Sugar Co. does not sell there.

"Consumption is outrunning the supply," Ms. Buffing said, accounting for the sugar prices hike. In the United States a five-pound bag of sugar has jumped from about 79 cents a year ago to $2.50 in some areas.

Ms. Buffing defended the resulting profit by saying "We are competitive with the rest of the sugar industry." World sugar prices are even higher, she said.

"We (GWU) have been losing money for several years — accordingly the percentage (of profit increase) has skyrocketed," she commented.

GWU, she contended, has obligation to keep competitive in the sugar market so as to "be fair to stockholders and sugar beet growers."