# DEFENSE DIGEST

***Your roundup of mobilization news and trends affecting power***

**Price control is finished,** even on a standby basis. All ceilings will be gone by April 30. Wage control is out, too, so wage increases are in the cards. Wage Stabilization Board, now disbanding, has backlog of 10,000 increases pending. And unions are sure to make demands based on price rises

**Many prices will rise,** and soon, but only where the natural supply-and-demand level was pushing against the control ceiling. Raw materials slated to rise probably include copper, aluminum, steel, crude oil and cement. Defense costs, too, will rise, as a direct result of rises in raw materials and components.

**Material and product control** is going also. Present authority expires June 30. Eisenhower plans only a military priority to replace the Controlled Materials Plan.

**New construction records** are likely for 1953, but construction employment for the year may be slightly down. Total employment may hit 63,000,000 this summer, Labor Dept. says. Except for steel strike, employment would have risen that high last summer.

**Russia's arms often look junky,** but may be most practical considering USSR production limitations, mainly shortage of skilled labor. Captured tanks reveal crude workmanship (that is, ragged welding) at noncritical points. Adequate quality at key points suggests that skilled workers are reserved for essential work only.

**Lead and zinc prices** have dropped about 30% in six months. That has pinched back mine output in this country, but supplies from abroad are plentiful.

**Zirconium steps out** as a commercial metal. To meet demands of Atomic Energy Commission Carborundum Metals Company will build and run zirconium plant in Akron, Ohio. Annual output of 150,000 lb will go to AEC for less than $15 per pound. Metal has high resistance to corrosion by acids and alkalis, but big advantage for AEC purposes is low absorption of precious neutrons when used as structural material in reactors.

**Law to free atomic power** is now urged by many, including Detroit Edison Company. Present Atomic Energy Act (McMahon Act of 1945) forbids private companies to own or build nuclear reactors — also restricts ownership of fissionable materials. Unlike other utility proposals, which could see no present possibility of commercial atomic power without Government subsidy or guaranteed purchase of plutonium, Detroit Edison, teamed with Dow Chemical Company, asks for no subsidy, thinks atomic power can soon stand on own feet.

**Detroit Edison's atomic plant** would be built in metropolitan Detroit area and feed power into existing electric lines. First studies are now complete. Company expects to finish specific designs this year and can then start building if U. S. says OK.