Representative REUSS. Among the recommendations made were that this committee include its findings and recommendations on the guideposts, and if the administration's guideposts are approved by the committee, this congressional action will strengthen their public acceptability. If the Joint Economic Committee's position on the guideposts differs from that of the President, it can be expected that the President would review them in the light of the committee's recommendations and that should result in greater public acceptance and, thus, opportunity of success.

You might comment on that particular point.

Secretary WIRTZ. It makes good sense to me.

Representative REUSS. There have been expressions from members of this committee during these hearings—in which, incidentally, we are doing precisely the kind of review of the guideposts that the Committee on Government Operations had in mind—There have been expressions from members of this committee that the removal of numbers from the guideposts this year is not desirable, that it does not tell labor and management what their obligations are. There is a suggestion before this committee that meaningful guideposts next year in wages would be a particularization of the CEA's past guideposts, taking into account, perhaps, in addition to the productivity increase of 3.2 percent, about half of last year's cost of living increase, working out at something like a 5 percent wage guidepost, subject to all the "ifs," "and" and "buts" of the guideposts; and that the price guideposts should likewise follow the past productivity trend recommendations of the CEA, but with special emphasis this year on meaningful action to urge price decreases where the over-average productivity trend of the particular industry permits that.

I would like your comments on that proposal. Suppose the Joint Economic Committee thought it wanted to state something like that?

Secretary WIRTZ. One question to make my answer as helpful as possible. Does your question anticipate one figure which effects the productivity principle which was in the guideposts, or does it reflect one figure which represents the proposed application of productivity principle, costs of living, ability to pay—is it just the productivity point that is to be put in the single figure or would all of these be brought together?

Representative REUSS. The suggestion is that we use the same formulation in other years as the Council has given it, that is to say, in recent years like 1965 and 1966, but that we provide some partial reckoning of the cost-of-living increases, added to productivity, which would come to about 5 percent, and then on the price guideposts we would suggest about what the Council did in 1965 and 1966, with a little more meaningful public education on the ability of overaverage productivity industries to reduce their prices.

Secretary WIRTZ. I would respectfully disagree and be in complete opposition for these reasons. Starting from the one which is implicit in your last point—it will never be possible for this country to learn a price guideposts expressed in specific figures the way it learns a wage guideposts because of the difficulties of communication which attend the situation. It is one of the great misfortunes.

Representative REUSS. I did not suggest they should be.