

Builder new mayor of Houston

United Press International
HOUSTON — Homebuilder Jim McConn, capitalizing on a strong coalition of liberal, black and Mexican American voters, Tuesday was elected mayor of the nation's fifth largest city by a 2-to-1 margin over former prosecutor Frank Briscoe.

McConn took a runaway lead at the very beginning and with 311 of 323 precincts reporting, he showed 125,922 votes or 65.7 percent to Briscoe's 65,693 or 34.2 percent.

Accountant Kathy Whitmire became the first woman to be elected comptroller — the second most powerful political job in the municipal government — over accountant Steve Jones. She polled 105,172 votes or 57.9 percent to Jones' 76,465 or 42 percent.

A pleased McConn said he was not surprised by the light turnout or by his victory over the cousin of Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe.

"Our polls have shown the last 10 days this would be the result. I must admit I was doubtful about the polls but we worked very hard and were thrilled to death to see it come out this way," he said.

"Despite the low vote, I will be able to work with the citizens of this city. This victory belongs to them."

McConn said he considered the issue of mass transportation and improvement of the inner city the major thrust of his fourthcoming administration. Briscoe was laconic in his defeat.

"I'm going to take a couple of days rest and then resume my law practice," Briscoe said.

Briscoe, 51, led in the Nov. 8 election, but McConn, 49, a former two-term city councilman, had been expected to pickup minority votes divided among several candidates in the earlier race. That election had a field of 12 mayoral hopefuls.

Briscoe, a former Harris County district attorney, maintained a low-profile campaign throughout the race, seldom making public appearances. During the runoff, both candidates avoided public exposure.

The race had no outstanding issues and was built around personalities of the conservative Briscoe as opposed to the moderate McConn.

Briscoe depicted McConn as a bankrupt businessman who might lead the city into financial ruin. McConn charged that Briscoe as secretive and would conduct city business behind closed doors.

In a joint televised news conference on election eve, each accused the other of distortion.

"I have been unfairly and unjustly labeled a racist by the McConn people," Briscoe said.

McConn charged Briscoe had misrepresented his business record, said he would solve personal financial problems resulting from a housing slump and added, "I have not set one foot in bankruptcy court." The two also clashed over pornography and federal aid to cities.

"I know what pornography is and I intend to stop it," said Briscoe who Saturday attended a rally in opposition to the National Women's Conference.

McConn said he doubted Briscoe could define pornography any better than the U.S. Supreme Court and said if Briscoe had the answer, "he should run for a higher office than mayor."

Both candidates criticized Mayor Fred Hofheinz who decided not to seek re-election to the two-year term, \$20,000-a-year job.

Air traffic controllers picket in state

United Press International
Air traffic controllers at three of the state's major airports Tuesday joined controllers at 150 airports across the nation in passing out leaflets as part of the three-day "informational picketing" to press their demands for a new contract.

"Our picketing will not disrupt or interrupt airport operations," said George Brandon, the southwest regional vice president of Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization.

"We had about 23 pickets at Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport, the maximum they would allow out there," he said. "And we had some at San Antonio and also El Paso."

"At Houston, they would only allow pickets at the base of the tower and obviously no one would see us there so we didn't bother."

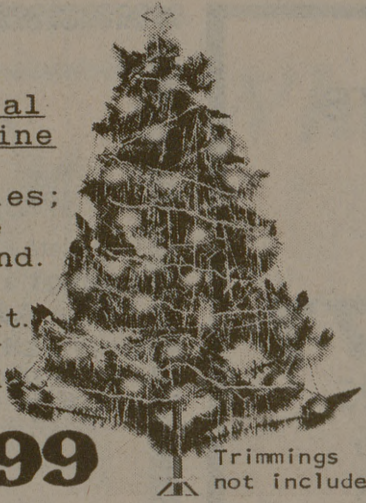
The picketing began nationwide Monday and was due to end this evening.

"We want the public to understand that we are not slowing down airplanes in any way," Brandon said. "We also want the public to know the picketing concerns working conditions, not wage complaints."

Negotiations between PATCO and the FAA have been sporadic since their contract expired July 8. The controllers decided to conduct the picketing after the latest round with a federal mediator broke off last week.

Controllers are federal employees and by law are barred from striking.

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