

Deal denied in vote on gas firm refunds

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Jon Newton denied today he was fulfilling campaign promises when he voted for the Railroad Commission to re-LoVaca Gathering Co. and States Gas Producing Co. to \$1.6 billion to customers.

Newton testified he studied legal precedents and the voluminous record in the five-year-old dispute over natural gas prices before voting Dec. 12 to order the refunds. Coastal and LoVaca are challenging Newton's participation in the 2-1 refund decision on grounds he is un-

fairly biased against the companies. Tracey DuBose, Coastal attorney, interrogated Newton in minute detail about his 1976 campaign statements during the second day of the court challenge Tuesday.

Newton acknowledged he was critical of a 1973 Railroad Commission decision allowing Coastal and LoVaca to charge rates nearly 10 times higher than the prices specified in longterm contracts with Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and many other Central and South Texas customers. But he denied he joined the three-man commission in 1977 determined to bankrupt the companies.

DuBose zeroed in on an April 1, 1976, statement issued by Newton's campaign workers saying, "The Texas Railroad Commission should go after the assets of Oscar Wyatt's empire to help relieve the consumers of some of the burden of the Coastal-LoVaca mess." Wyatt is chairman of Coastal's board of directors.

Newton said he intended to recommend that the Railroad Commission require Coastal and LoVaca to fulfill contract obligations to supply natural gas at specified, low rates.

The Railroad Commission ordered LoVaca and Coastal customers in 1975 to pay whatever it cost the pipeline to purchase gas plus 5 cents a thousand cubic feet for transportation.

Canal control necessary

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The leading critic of the Panama Canal testified Tuesday that no amendments can correct basic faults of any plan giving control of the waterway to Panama. Attempts at clarification are not enough, said Sen. James Allen.

vessels in emergencies, and the right of U.S. military intervention to maintain neutrality of the canal.

"No amount of band-aid amendments can correct the basic faults embodied in any plan which gives control of the canal to Panama at any time," Allen testified.

"If we give up physical control, this country will still, sooner or later, find itself at the mercy of some petty dictator who decides, probably with the backing of the Soviet Union, to cause difficulties for the United States in using this vital strategic waterway."

Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., today urged President Carter to go to Panama to sign an agreement making it clear the United States has a right to defend the Panama Canal.

Goldwater, who visited Panama early this month, said Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos was "most receptive" to the idea when he suggested it.

Christmas mail costs down

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Christmas mail reached a record high of 8.5 billion pieces this season but was delivered just as fast as a year ago and at a lower cost to the government, Postmaster General Benjamin

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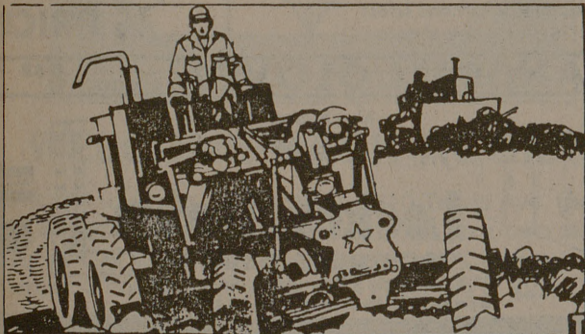
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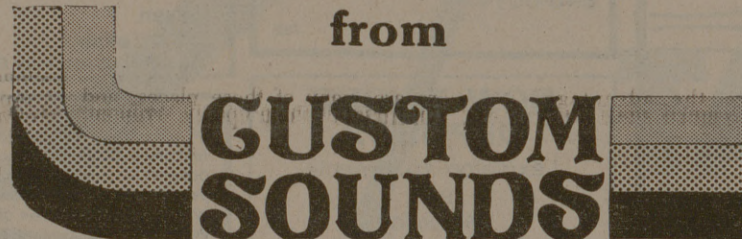
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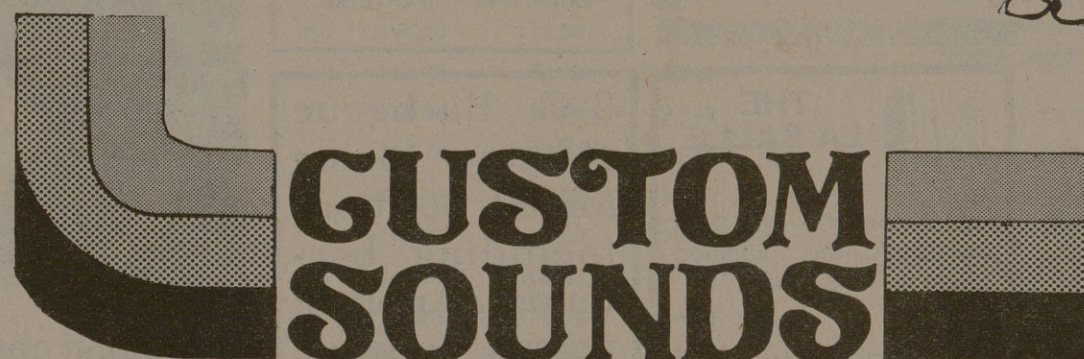
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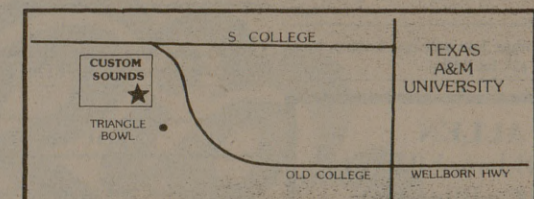
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