

Bell cites high legal expenses to justify proposed rate hike

United Press International
AUSTIN — Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. wants customers to pay its \$350,000 legal expense for court battles concerning a 1977 rate increase, officials indicated Tuesday.

Critics questioned Bell's chief accountant, C.W. Swenson of Dallas, about including costs of hiring outside attorneys for the continuing court fight in company expenses cited as justification for a proposed \$214 million rate increase.

Swenson said the company expense reports include \$349,668 for payments to outside attorneys challenging the Public Utility Commission's decision which trimmed an earlier request for a \$298 million increase to \$58 million.

The accountant said outlays of \$777,000 in legal expenses for defense of the phone company against multimillion dollar lawsuits brought by James Ashley and T.O. Gravitt were not included.

Swenson said the phone company

regards the Ashley-Gravitt outlay as a non-recurring expense, but expects continuing costs from court appeals of the regulatory board's decision.

The \$349,668 figure, in fact, does not cover costs of appealing the rate case to the State Supreme Court since it includes only expenses through Sept. 30, 1977, when the controversy was in the Court of Civil Appeals.

Swenson said the phone company needs more than the \$214 million rate increase now under consideration by the three-man utility commission.

"I still think the revenue deficiency is \$220 million," the accountant said.

George Cowden, utility commission chairman, refused to allow the phone company to revise its rate raise request upward Monday.

"They're limited to \$214 million," Cowden said. He said the phone company cannot change its rate proposal without starting a new case

and giving public notice of the revision.

Swenson said the \$214 million figure was \$6 million short because of an error in calculating interest deductions on federal income tax.

The interest deductions drew criticism from an attorney for the Texas Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, Carol Barger of Longview.

Ms. Barger said Bell only paid \$21.6 million in federal income taxes during the year ending Sept. 30, 1977, but wants to collect \$354 million in taxes from customers.

"They receive an investment tax credit of \$121.2 million and they defer payment of \$169.2 million in taxes," she said.

Swenson said the tax credits and deferrals provide money for the phone company's capital outlays.

"We're taking advantage of the tax law there. It's providing interest free capital for us to invest. So it's of direct benefit to the customer," he said.

Burnett honored by San Antonians

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Carol Burnett cupped her hands to her mouth and yelled out her famous Tarzan yell Tuesday in front of the Alamo while an estimated 1,000 admirers watched.

Burnett smiled, pulled her ear, panned for cameras and waved at the throng which sweltered in hot and humid weather waiting for a glimpse of one of the city's most famous natives.

The crowd rivaled in size some of those which have gathered in front of the shrine to hear speeches from some of the nation's most well known politicians.

"It's been the most wonderful day I've ever had. It's been an absolute thrill," said the smiling redhead, who graduated from David Crockett Elementary School before moving to California.

Her eyes glistened with moisture briefly while Mayor Lila Cockrell read a proclamation declaring Tues-

day, "Carol Burnett Day" and making the entertainer an honorary mayor of San Antonio.

"Now that I'm mayor for a day I'd like to proclaim a school holiday," Burnett said as hundreds of children applauded.

Dr. William Elizondo, superintendent of the San Antonio Independent School District, added to her stack of honors by presenting Burnett a picture of her childhood home on West Commerce St., now located in one of the city's poorest sections; a picture of Crockett Elementary; a plaque for participating in the district's honors day at Alamo Stadium (where she did a Tarzan yell for 9,600 school children), and a transcript showing she made A's while attending elementary school in San Antonio.

"As mayor I protest," she said in mock disapproval as the transcript was read showing she was bright enough to skip two grades at the school.

Americans smoke more

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Americans are smoking more cigarettes but getting less tar and nicotine in the process, the Federal Trade Commission says.

An FTC report says the nation's cigarette manufacturers sold 603.2 billion cigarettes in 1975, an increase of 9 billion over 1974.

But a separate report said cigarettes now contain less tar and nicotine, substances which experts feel are harmful to health.

The 3-year-old cigarette production figure actually translated into a slight decrease in average consumption among adults.



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'Jaws 2': no whopper this time

By JEFF GILLEY
The setting was the Medallion theater in Dallas, May 12. Housewives, businessmen, and children clutching old shark dolls grabbed up tickets to the sneak preview a full seven hours before show time.

Finally, at precisely 8 p.m., the lights dimmed and the packed house applauded eagerly as the first public presentation "Jaws 2" began.

The purpose of a sneak preview is to gauge audience reaction to a film

before it opens nationally — in other words, to find out if the producers have a bomb or a gold mine waiting in the vaults. After this preview, the audience trudged out of the theater with expressions reminiscent of pickled herring. "Jaws 2," it seems, may well turn on its side and sink at the box office when it opens June 16.

Like most sequels, "Jaws 2" tries to duplicate, but just can't live up to, the original film. Once again, a monster shark decides to terrorize the resort island of Amity, a believable premise once, but not twice.

Its target, among other things, is a largely teenage cast easily outacted by the mechanical shark. Their insipid performances can be forgiven; the real culprit is director Jeannot Szwarc, who cast them as

laughable stereotypes: the high school beauty queen, the chubby class clown, and the bespectacled weakling.

The main problem with "Jaws 2," however, is that it plods around on dry land most of the time, laboring over Sheriff Brody (Roy Scheider), his family, the mayor, the teenagers, and others. It's with deadening infrequency that the new Great White Shark shows up at all, baring his fangs only occasionally to gobble a passing waterskiier or helicopter, (that's right, a helicopter.)

Disappointment marked the faces of many after the Dallas preview. "Make it scarier next time," one man scowled at an usher as he left. "What did you think of it?" an autograph hound timidly asked Lorraine Gary, one of the stars attending the preview. A noncommittal groan and a quick signature were the only replies. "Movies, like sharks, must keep moving constantly or they die," I wrote on one

Review

of the evaluation forms handed out to the audience after the film.

Unfortunately, it would seem almost impossible to doctor "Jaws 2" into a good movie by its release date. The producers, Richard D. Zanuck and David Brown, are financial fishermen trying for that second whopper with this sequel. Only time will tell, but they may have to write off "Jaws 2" as the one that got away.

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