

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION • TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY • THURSDAY • JULY 19, 1979

Get all the big disaster hits

The other day in the newsroom, we received a copy of Ripley's Believe It or Not book on great disasters.

Ripley's Believe It or Not started out as a syndicated comic strip feature in newspapers. They have expanded their field of endeavor to pocketbooks and now, to disaster pocketbooks.

Irwin Allen would be turning over in his grave if he were dead.

The first thing about the book that caught our eyes was the back cover.

Here, the book gives a sneak peek at what we can expect inside. Not much, if the examples given are any indication. For instance, it says that "a woman was sucked through a window by a tornado, swept 60 feet through the air and dropped, unharmed, next to a recording of 'Stormy Weather.'"

Interesting, eh?

The front cover of the book has a picture of some undiscernable explosion and reads "A rare insight into the calamities around the world." Not as rare as we'd like, fella.

Above the title, the reader is assured that the contents are "All New! All True!" That's good. No one wants to read about false disasters.

And what's so great about a disaster, anyway? Great to David Berkowitz or Sam Peckinpah, we'll bet. We can think of a lot of things disasters are, but great isn't one of them. Interesting, possibly, if you're really sick, but great?

The book covers all the spectacular carnage in the world's history. Every page is filled with fun facts about death and destruction. Things you'd never talk about at dinner parties, church socials or sorority

mixers are described in gruesome yet whimsical detail.

The book is sometimes inspirational. It tells of a storm that destroyed every church in a town except the synagogues and Episcopal churches. That is comforting if you happen to be Jewish or Episcopalian.

The Ripley editors also tell of the 1953 tornado in Worcester, Mass. that whisked children into the air "and had to be dragged back to Earth by their frantic mothers." There must be a lesson there somewhere.

The book sometimes lets the readers draw their own conclusions about the personalities of famous people. The famous opera tenor, Enrico Caruso, for example, "ran through the rubble of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, a towel around his throat, clutching an autographed picture of Teddy Roosevelt." We don't understand

the significance of any of that dribble, but it must be important.

The editors of the book had the morbid tendency of placing exclamation points after body counts. All through the book you see phrases such as "180,000 Chinese died!" or "killing approximately 2,000 people!"

Our favorite disaster fact, though, is the one about the Japanese research ship. It seems the 'Kaiyo-Maru' was sent to investigate an underwater volcano when it "was suddenly blown to smithereens by a mighty eruption beneath the sea!" This little story leaves quite a few questions unanswered. What caused the explosion? When did it happen? Why are we reading this?

Of course, the book and all of its fun disaster facts can be picked up at your neighborhood book store for \$1.75. BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

—R.W.B., K.A.T.

Fighting over the 'pie'

HUD programs hit snarl

By DAVID E. ANDERSON
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The most praised of President Carter's urban policy programs, the HUD's Urban Development Action Grants, are running into an old-fashioned political problem — everybody wants a piece of the pie.

The program, dubbed UDAG, targets federal funds to particularly distressed communities. The grants are tied to the commitment of private sector funds for encouraging economic development and physical revitalization.

Modest by federal standards — the authorization is \$400 million a year for three years — the program has worsened Snowbelt-Sunbelt friction, with the newer, less distressed areas of the South, Southwest and West claiming they aren't getting their fair share of the funds.

At issue is what urban analysts call "pockets of poverty" — distressed, declining or impoverished areas in cities and communities that are otherwise doing well.

Under the UDAG program, funds go to communities with the greatest needs. A set of six criteria, including rate of poverty, age of housing stock, population and employment growth lag, growth of per capita income and unemployment rate were established to determine eligibility.

As a result, 322 out of 559 large cities and 11 urban counties were declared eligible for funds in fiscal 1978. The list did not include such cities as Dallas, Houston,

Phoenix or San Diego.

Supporters of UDAG funding and targeting dismiss the cries of discrimination against the Sunbelt and note that California had the largest number of cities eligible (31) and that Texas had the second largest (25).

Nevertheless, critics of the program say that it is wrong to exclude entire cities and that ways must be found for making "pockets of poverty" within otherwise non-distressed cities eligible for UDAG assistance.

"Census data for 1970 show that large distressed areas exist in all 50 of the nation's largest cities, including those ineligible for UDAG," according to a HUD study on pockets of poverty.

In 1978, Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., introduced an amendment to broaden UDAG eligibility to cities or counties containing "one or more areas which have the levels of physical and economic distress" set forth in UDAG requirements.

Tower defined such areas as one or more neighboring census tracts with a population of at least 10,000 people.

Supporters of the Tower amendment said it was unfair to penalize disadvantaged persons in pockets of poverty because the jurisdiction within which they lived was relatively prosperous.

When the Senate voted on the Tower amendment in July 1978, HUD had already published its list of UDAG-eligible cities and the political point was driven home: excluded from UDAG funding competition were 237 large communities, including 18 of the nation's 50

largest cities.

The Senate passed the Tower amendment 47 to 38. Although the House did not take up the issue and the Tower amendment was subsequently dropped from the Omnibus Housing Bill for 1978, the message was clear to HUD — find some way to deal with the needs of the pockets of poverty in places like Houston, Dallas and other nondistressed cities.

HUD, asking for a \$275 million increase in UDAG funding, has offered its own proposal to Congress to include poverty pockets in the program. It rejects both the idea of a new program or changing the present criteria used to determine the eligible list of distressed cities.

"Clearly, the needs of these pockets and their residents are real and deserving of our concern," said HUD Undersecretary Jay Janis.

HUD said it was willing to commit up to 15 percent of total UDAG funds to poverty pockets. But it also renewed its call for congressional approval of Carter's request for additional funding for the program.

Under its proposal, HUD officials estimated somewhere between 250 and 300 communities not now eligible as distressed cities could potentially receive funds.

HUD officials say they still find the Tower proposal unacceptable but believe they could live with proposed legislation in the House that sets "pockets" money at around 20 percent of the UDA budget.

1977 oil quotas not really that bad

By JAMES HILDRETH
United Press International

WASHINGTON — A few weeks ago, President Carter along with leaders of the world's six other industrialized powers pledged at the Tokyo summit to reduce dependence on foreign oil imports.

Carter made the same promise again Sunday night. But this time it was louder and more dramatic. And millions of Americans, sitting in their living rooms, heard him.

But how will Carter's stringent resolve that "beginning this moment, this nation will never use more foreign oil than we did in 1977" affect short-term economic conditions in the United States?

Very little. There is still a good chance that up to a million workers will lose their jobs by the end of this year because of the recession which most analysts believe started during the second quarter.

The administration has acknowledged that the nation's economic growth rate will decline for the rest of the year and possibly into early 1980. And unemployment should rise from 5.6 percent in June to 6.6 percent in the fourth quarter and 6.9 percent by the end of next year.

Each percentage point of increase in the unemployment rate translates into 1 million lost jobs, analysts say.

Furthermore, there is virtually no likelihood that consumer prices will recede dramatically from the double-digit levels of today — at least until next year. The administration has already forecast a 10.6 percent inflation rate for 1979 — the second highest since the end of World War II.

The administration has said inflation should rise by 8.3 percent in 1980. And that does not take into account any future decisions by oil producers to hike prices once again.

So Carter's energy initiatives aimed at partially severing the pipeline between the price-conscious oil cartel and the American gas tank are basically measures to stabilize the economy over the longer run — the 1980s — not immediately as some Americans would like.

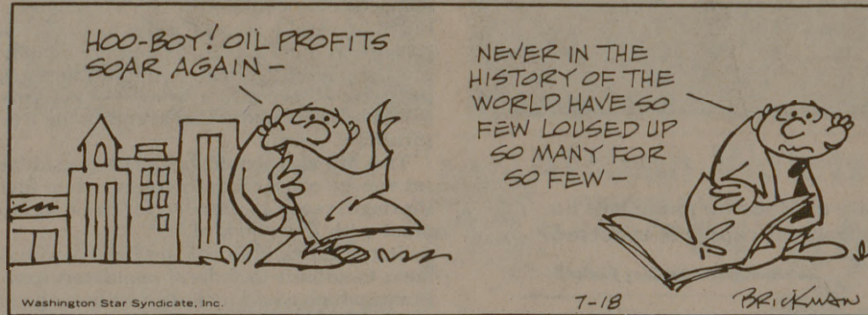
There is one statistic that was not mentioned by Carter Sunday night — \$70 billion. That is his energy adviser's estimate of how much the United States will shovel overseas next year to purchase oil.

The 1980 estimate compares with a projected \$58 billion this year and only \$4.2 billion in 1972 — the year before the Arab oil embargo.

The \$70 billion will be paid by the American public in terms of higher prices and continued pressure on the overall economy.

the small society

by Brickman



U.S. Economy following Skylab's crash pattern

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — I was a bit unsettled, as I imagine many other Americans must have been, by the poor grace with which Australia reacted to the scattering of Skylab debris on that country.

"Feevish" is the word that comes to mind when one sets about describing the Australian attitude.

The Aussies make it all too plain that if it weren't for the honor of the thing they would just as soon have pieces of delectable American space vehicles fall somewhere else.

I'm sure nobody in this country expected the Australians to exclaim "Thanks, we needed that!" On the other hand, it does

seem they could have been a tad less testy about it.

I mean, we were in rather an awkward situation there with that huge hunk of metal whizzing around us in the firmament and us with no real notion as to where it was going to drop. It could even have dropped on us.

Those are moments when you count on your friends to recognize your discomfort and show a little forbearance.

Ideally, when we told the Australians, "Sorry about that," or words to that effect, they would have replied, "Oh, think nothing of it," or "It happens in the best of circles," or words to that effect.

It was, in short, a time for them to have been big about it. Had we been in their shoes, I like to think we would have exhibited a much greater measure of savoir-faire.

If Australia had, somehow, let a giant boomerang get out of control and inadvertently crash somewhere in the United States, I feel certain we would have done everything we could to put them at ease.

I mean, what are friends for, if not to help each other over the rough spots?

However, I don't wish to appear to be lecturing the Australians on space age etiquette. I merely bring this up by way of getting everyone prepared for a possible new contretemps.

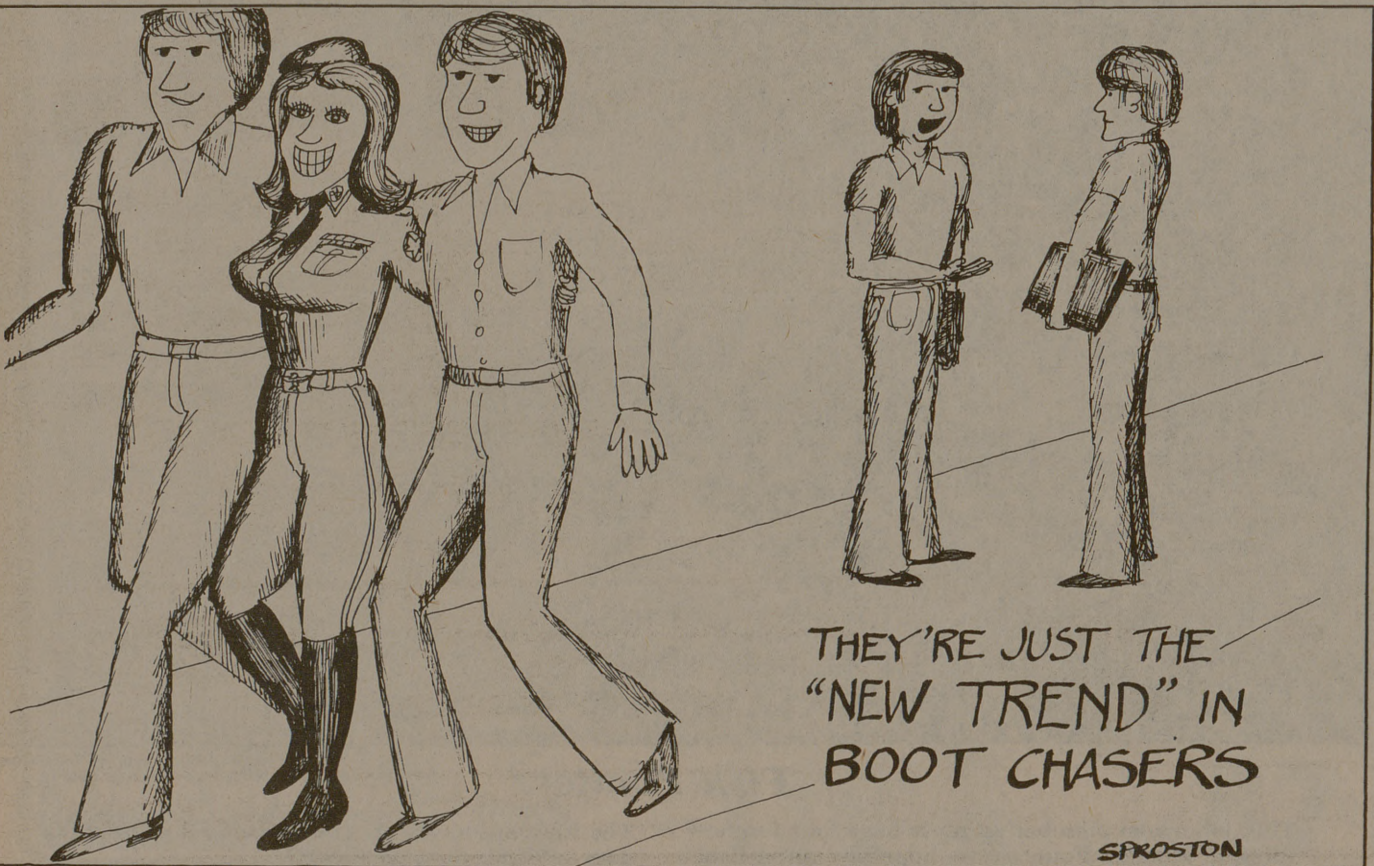
Even the White House now admits that the U.S. economy is falling. And when one country's economy plunges, it almost always has an impact in other countries.

The problem seems to be that the various controls built into the economy no longer function very well. One expert told me about the only thing the government can do is cause the economy to tumble end-over-end, which it already apparently is doing.

The end-over-end descent is said to lessen the possibility of a steep nosedive or tailspin.

As for the possibility of Australia being flattened by our plummeting economy, the experts say the odds are about the same as the odds against a goose being fatally struck by a golf club.

Nevertheless, there is no absolute guarantee the downturn won't be felt Down Under. Should it happen, we shall hope our Australian friends will be more magnanimous than they were when Skylab fell on them.



TOP OF THE NEWS

STATE

Davis quints celebrate birthday

With doctors, nurses, reporters and their parents — but no other children — gathered to celebrate, the Davis quintuplets frolicked and ate cupcakes to celebrate their fourth birthday at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Dallas. The girls, Chanda, Chatta, Christa and Chelsea, all blondes, stole the show in their pink checkered dresses with white pinafores, while the red-headed boy, Casey, looked on. They played among themselves, seeming oblivious to a crowd of hospital staffers — almost all women with "aren't they precious" smiles — who kept their distance while photographers and cameramen maneuvered to catch all five in one frame.

One dies from oil rig explosion

One of two men burned Tuesday in an oil rig fire and explosion near San Angelo died early Wednesday at Brooke Army Medical Center. San Antonio, officials said. The other, Robert Henry Martin, 53, of Christoval, was transferred to the center early Tuesday with first, second and third-degree burns over 90 percent of his body. Both men, employees of the Pool Co. of San Angelo, had been checking the flow of tanks at the oil rig when the explosion occurred. Pool spokesman Bill Sneed theorized fumes from a flow tank may have been ignited when one of the men tried to start a truck.

Man dies from gasoline burns

A critically burned man who told Lubbock police in March he was doused with gasoline and set afire has died during surgery related to his injuries. Kenneth Dale Ashley, 32, died Tuesday in the operating room at Health Sciences Center Hospital. Ashley was undergoing surgery to relieve tension caused by severe burns, physicians told. Justice of the Peace Wayne LeCroy, Ashley, in severe pain, walked into Methodist Hospital's emergency room about 4 a. m. March 20, suffering from burns over 25 percent of his body. He was listed in critical condition for several days following his hospitalization. Neither the source nor the motive for setting Ashley ablaze has been determined, authorities said.

NATION

GM recalls 1.8 million autos

General Motors Corp. in Detroit has recalled 1.8 million 1978-model intermediate cars and light trucks — its largest recall in two years — because of a front wheel defect blamed in 22 accidents and at least one death. A GM spokesman said Tuesday the defect, which could produce a loss of vehicle control, involves faulty outer front wheel bearing lubrication. The recall includes GM's entire 1978-model year production of the Chevrolet Malibu and Monte Carlo, Pontiac LeMans AND Grand Prix, Oldsmobile Cutlass and Buick Century and Regal as well as the Chevrolet El Camino and GMC Caballero specialty trucks.

'Foul' play stopped by bank teller

The would-be bank robber's mistake was his foul language. Instead of intimidating a 50-year-old woman teller in Oceanside, Calif., he offended her that she bashed him with a cash drawer and started a fight that led to his arrest. Police said the robber, wearing a motorcycle helmet and carrying a pistol, walked into a branch of California First Bank late Monday and handed the teller a note that read: "Give me all your money or I'll blow your head off." The teller "got very mad at the man and told him in a loud voice what she thought of his language," a police spokesman said. "She pulled out a wooden cash drawer and slugged him with it. The gunman fled empty-handed, with three customers and two bank employees in pursuit. "The chase was so hot he ran right past his getaway car," the spokesman said.

Not tonight, I've got a toothache

Henry Doorly Zoo officials in Omaha, Neb., credit dental work for making a male sun bear more of a lover than a fighter. And, Dr. Lee Simmons, zoo director, says, the root canal tooth surgery performed on the bear last year paid off in the form of a baby cub Sunday. Simmons said the bear had a succession of mates since his arrival at the zoo in 1966, but none, including his current mate, could tolerate his aggressiveness. "As long as he had those canine teeth, he wasn't compatible with anyone," Simmons said.

WORLD

Anti-Khomeini leader still missing

Millions of Iranians marched in Tehran in support of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's condemnation of opponents of the Islamic revolution, but foes of the Iranian leader set off a bomb in a western Kurdish town killing eight people. Unrest also simmered Tuesday in the oil province of Khuzestan over the disappearance of ethnic Arab leader Ayatollah Al Shubair Khaqani, who seeks autonomy for the region. Arab militants charged their leader was being held prisoner by revolutionaries somewhere in southern Iran and said "supporters of Khaqani" had served the government with a 48-hour ultimatum expiring Thursday to obtain Khaqani's "release." But Rear Adm. Ahmad Madani, navy commander and governor-general of Khuzestan province, said Khaqani was "safe and sound" and lodged in a house "somewhere in Khuzestan." The governor-general, who spoke to UPI from his office in Ahvaz, capital of Khuzestan province, said Khaqani was moved out of Khorramshahr because of danger to his life. Political analysts said Khaqani's disappearance could precipitate a confrontation between underground Arab guerrilla groups and government forces, already strained by trying to guard the nation's crucial oil installations.

THE BATTALION

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LETTERS POLICY

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