

the state

New arrivals to suffer, expert says

Texas boom may fuel bust

United Press International
The Texas economy is rocketing forward despite the threat of a national recession. But while thousands move south toward expected relief from high energy costs of inflation, one energy expert says the boom that attracted them could plunge them into poverty.

Though some other experts do not talk in such bleak terms, Dr. Carl Cook, Dean of Geosciences at Texas A&M University, contends a number of poor or marginally employed people in the South will be as retirees, illegal immigrants from Mexico and unemployed workers from the North and Midwest move to Texas to escape gas prices, higher heating bills and spiraling costs.

Even with the Sun Belt's economic boom, it has a greater percentage of poor people than does the Frost Belt," he said. "This proportion will increase because inflation and energy costs will rise as the boom continues. Many fixed-income retirees and marginally employed workers will slip back into poverty as the cost of living goes up."

The same factors that make a boom-town also bring the inflation and energy problems many of these people are trying to escape."

Cook believes energy-related research in social and economic areas is necessary to find a way to prevent the boom from crashing down upon thousands of urban Sun Belt workers tied to the high-energy network of pipelines, air conditioning and processed food.

"It may be that such research can save energy and dollars while preserving, perhaps even improving, the quality of life," he said.

However, some experts across the state believe life is good in Texas and that the boom will remain so. They point to as in the job and industry figures as their proof.

Dianne Dobie, a supervising labor market analyst for the Texas Employment Commission, says the state's unemployment rate has been lower than the nation's for years despite the addition of nearly 1 million to the labor force during the past few years.

"We don't have the problems in Texas that a lot of states have," she says. "We have a more stable economy. I don't think a recession is in Texas that much."

Gary Gleason, an official with the Texas Industrial Commission set up to attract new industry to the state, says the major urban areas attract business and people simply because of their size, and that Texas is competing to get the lion's share of new industry and expansion.

"Energy for industrial development is in abundant supply in Texas and will be for a long, long time," he said. "That's on the minds of corporate decisionmakers. There's obviously a great interest in Texas."

"I don't foresee an end to the boom in the immediate future but on the other hand, while some people say Texas is left untouched by economic downturns in the country, that's not true."

"In periods like the present, with high inflation and slowing growth nationwide, there may be some slowing in Texas in some sections of the economy, but I haven't seen any sign of that."

Dr. Tom Plaut, a research associate with the University of Texas' Bureau of Business Research, agrees a slowing of the Texas economy is possible after several years of an upsurge that helped make the South the nation's fastest growing region.

"I would expect the growth of Texas to continue through the next seven or eight years, but perhaps at lower rates than we've seen in the past few years," Plaut says. "A lot of people are still moving to Texas and as for the quality of life issue, Texas is still attracting a lot of industry because of several factors."

Plaut says that while retirees, the underemployed and illegal aliens may be attracted to Sun Belt cities, history indicates it is not the poor who migrate in large numbers.

"We really don't have detailed information on the type of people moving in since 1970," he said. "We're all looking forward to the 1980 census to tell us what's going on, but I don't see where this area should be different from any other fast-growing area. The type of people who move in tend to be in their 20s, better-educated, higher-skilled and so forth."

Plaut also says he's not sure the number of poor is as important as some other potential by-products of growth.

"I don't understand this poverty argument (of Cook's)," he said. "I can't see that effect as being too important. There other negative types of things that tend to arise — pollution and congestion, for example. I would think those things would be more important than the poverty effect."

Plaut also contends that an increase in the cost of energy doesn't necessarily foreshadow the end of the private auto.

"No one can predict how high energy prices will go. But very high

energy prices don't necessarily mean the demise of the auto. There is a tremendous possibility that much more efficient automobiles can be built."

Another person who disagrees with Cook's theory is economist John Morgan. Morgan lives and works in Houston, the fastest growing city in the nation.

"The best statistic to look at is per capita personal income, which right now in Houston is the 11th highest in the nation," Morgan said. "If you look at the period from 1970-77, you'll see that the Houston area had one of the fastest growth rates of any major city in terms of per capita personal income."

"If this theory is correct, it would say per capita income would increase at a slower rate than in the rest of the nation. But from 1969-77, the Houston per capita income went from \$3,700 to \$8,247 per person. That gave us a ranking of No. 16 in the nation. But according to his theory, our ranking should have actually declined because we would have been getting more poor people."

Morgan also believes the energy problems of the Sun Belt are less severe than in the North where gallons of heating oil are a necessity, and the poor are likely to improve their situations by moving to such cities as Houston.


"Houston and all major cities face the same type of problems cities in the North face with poor people," he said. "We're always going to have our proportion of poor people."

"However, there's a greater opportunity here in Houston where perhaps the opportunities aren't in the North. With Houston growing as fast as it is, there are a lot of opportunities for good jobs."

Adelphi offers new program

United Press International
GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — A pilot program has been established at Adelphi University in Garden City to help high school graduates with learning disabilities gain admission to college and complete degree study. Dr. Fred Barbaro, director of the new program and a social work

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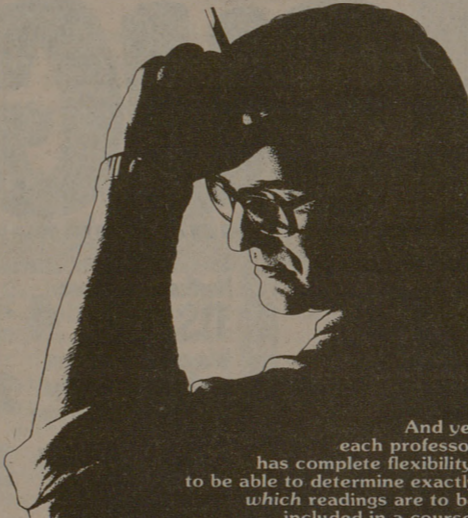
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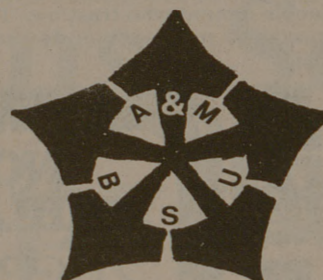
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