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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — A media conference, criticized for a lack of minority and non-journalistic representation, rejected a proposal Tuesday that news groups endorse judicial candidates sensitive to First Amendment rights.

Recommendations on special interest groups, judicial endorsements and non-journalistic representation sparked controversy at the two-day conference, which drew more than 150 delegates.

The conference rejected a suggestion by Jack Landau of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press that news organizations endorse judicial candidates who champion First Amendment rights.

Arnoldo Torres, congressional liaison for the League of United Latin American Citizens, complained of a lack of minority representation at the conference. Others charged that private industry was not properly represented.

"I would have liked to have seen many more people from the public sector," said chairman Jean Otto, Op-Ed editor of the Milwaukee Journal. "That's what we wanted."

The delegates adopted 12 reports addressing topics ranging from privacy rights, public access and media ethics and made recommendations of ways to reverse growing hostility toward the press.

The conference primarily focused on threats posed by the courts and the proliferation of government regulatory agencies to the First Amendment rights of the press and public.

The delegates received a survey compiled by pollster George Gallup Jr. which found 75 percent of 1,500 adults polled had never heard of the First Amendment, and only 42 percent of the college graduates sur-



veyed understood the amendment's purpose.

Gallup also found twice as many Americans think the nation needs tighter curbs on the press than those who think fewer controls are necessary.

Another finding showed people have less confidence in their newspapers than they used to.

Firestone plans to close plants

AKRON, Ohio — The Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. Wednesday announced plans to close permanently five tire plants and a synthetic latex plant as part of a restructuring of its North American tire operations, idling 7,000 employees.

The planned action will require an after-tax charge of \$49 million, or 85 cents per share, to second-quarter earnings, according to Chairman-Chief Executive Officer Richard A. Riley.

Personnel at the plants, where 1,500 people now are on indefinite layoff, totals about 5,000 hourly and 2,000 salaried people.

Tire production will be discontinued in Dayton and Barberton, Ohio; Los Angeles and Salinas, Calif.; and Pottstown, Pa. The synthetic latex plant is in Akron.

Riley also said employee termination, pension and other costs associated with the actions total an estimated \$82 million after taxes, but will be offset somewhat by an esti-

ated \$33 million gain from liquidation of inventory reserves.

"The realignment is intended to meet changing market conditions by eliminating unneeded capacity that has been used mainly for producing bias-ply tires," Riley said.

"The planned actions will reduce Firestone's manufacturing costs and improve its ability to meet the needs of its original equipment customers, Firestone dealers and stores, and Dayton (Tire) dealers."

Production at the plants affected will be phased out in line with customer requirements, according to the company, which said the realignment is expected to be completed before the end of the company's fiscal year in October.

Firestone said it is advising its employees, the United Rubber Workers Union and government officials of its intention to carry out the planned actions in accordance with existing union agreements and in a way that will attempt to minimize the effects on the people and communities involved.

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More banks up interest rate

NEW YORK — The 19 percent prime lending rate spread through more of the banking industry Wednesday with a move to the record level by Citibank of New York.

Citibank, ranked No. 2 in the nation, is the largest institution to hike the rate from 18 1/2 percent. It was followed by Chemical Bank and Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co.

On Tuesday, Chase Manhattan, No. 3, was the first to move from the 18 1/4 percent level to 19 percent, and it was followed by a handful of major banks.

Despite requests from the Federal Reserve Board to resist more interest rate hikes, banks contend they have no choice, given their present

cost of obtaining funds. Bankers also say there will be new pressure on rates because of the Washington economic package aimed at curbing inflation.

That could push the prime rate — charged a bank's most credit-worthy borrowers on short-term loans — to 20 percent. At the start of the year it stood at 15 1/4 percent.

For consumers, each step up the

interest rate ladder makes lending harder to obtain. Almost all banks have curtailed consumer loans of every type.

Chase indicated further rate hikes were in the pipeline. It said even 19 percent does not cover its current cost of funds or include the cost of new Fed rules that make it more expensive for banks to expand certain types of credit.

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