

High interest cuts auto sales

United Press International
High interest rates are driving record numbers of the nation's auto dealers out of business. Even Cadillac and Rolls-Royce dealers are not exempt.
"If everybody that was sold could get financed, we wouldn't have a problem," said Dave Sinclair, a St. Louis County Ford dealer whose sales volume is the highest in Missouri. "People are ready and willing — they're just not able."
The National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) estimates 600 new car dealerships folded in 1979, when rising gasoline prices started the long auto industry slump. Rising interest rates have shut down more dealers.
The association estimates 200 more dealerships went out of business in the first three months of 1980, compared with a normal attrition rate of 150 a year. The overall number of dealerships has been declining steadily since the late 1940s.
Many dealers describe the situation as worse than the last deep auto industry recession in 1974-75. Many have been forced to lay off em-

ployees. Some are seeking help from the government, or relief from the factory.
"Obviously it's a very serious problem," said George S. Irvin, a Chevrolet dealer in Denver and NADA president. "It's way beyond anything anybody's ever experienced before."
Dealers around the nation contacted by UPI gave identical reports of sales loss because consumers can't get loans and profits lost because of high interest rates.
"It's hurting us in two ways," said Jim Hines Sr., president of Oliver Motor Co., a Chrysler-Plymouth dealership in Columbia, S.C. "We have to pay tremendous costs and we have to sell cars with high interest rates the customer can't afford."
Even luxury car dealerships are experiencing problems.
"What it amounts to is this: We're doing pretty well in sales, but not in operating profit because of the high interest rates on inventory and credit crunch for the customer," said Roger Meier of Rodger Meier Cadillac in Dallas.

Ruling debated

Prayer in public schools issue still not settled

By GAIL WEAHERLY
City Reporter

Prayer in public school, which, contrary to what most people believe, was not abolished in 1963, is still going on in many school systems today in Texas and other states, but not in Bryan or College Station.
There are as many interpretations of what the Supreme Court meant in 1963 as there are schools across the nation. The idea that the court meant that no prayer should be allowed in the schools is constantly being tested by schools and administrators.
At Highland Park High School in Dallas, student council members read a prayer everyday at noon over the public address system. The principal, E.A. Sigler, said the prayer is legal because it is an activity of the student council rather than the school administration. He said the Supreme Court had made the "implication of no prayer," but no specific ruling had been given on voluntary student prayer.
Sigler said there is no mandate by administrators about this prayer; it is totally controlled by the student council.

But Constance Adams, 15, a student who publicly opposed her school's practice of broadcasting prayer, told reporters:
"Personally, I'm a very religious person. I'm a Catholic. But I'm deeply offended that Highland Park has chosen to ignore the fundamental precepts on which this country was founded — freedom of religion and separation of church and state."
The executive director of the Texas Civil Liberties Union, John Duncan, said Sigler was wrong in his interpretation. "When they allow school facilities and school time to promote religious activity it is illegal," Duncan said.
Duncan's interpretation of the 1963 Supreme Court ruling is that there "should be no prayer or religious exercise in the classroom."
It is a different matter, however, he said, "if religion is presented as literature, history, or social studies where the person doing the teaching isn't advocating a religious teaching."
"A student has the right to pray, but just because a student is moved to pray doesn't give the teacher the right to tell the entire class, 'There will now be a time for prayer.'"
There is no suit being filed against the Dallas school system, but a group of parents in Lubbock has filed suit against the Lubbock Independent School System in conjunction with the Lubbock Civil Liberties Union.
Thomas J. Griffith, attorney for the Lubbock CLU, said he is careful not to give out the names of the parents filing suit because of possible harassment to their children.
The Lubbock suit, he said, is based on a long-standing custom of religious exercises rather than just a single incident or prayer, and school officials are fighting to keep that custom.
"Three children tried to leave an evangelical sermon and were ordered to stay," Griffith said. "The administration is determined to defy the Supreme Court and the First Amendment interpretation."
On March 13, 1980, the Mas-

sachusetts Supreme Judicial Court struck down that law saying that it was an establishment of religion and a violation of the First Amendment.
In December 1979, a school superintendent in Concord, N.H., refused to let a group of Gideons distribute Bibles to children in grades 5 through 12 saying that it would open the "floodgates" to other religious groups.
The interpretation that the Supreme Court ruling meant prayer or religious exercises were not to be carried on on school property using a "captive audience" of school children is largely accepted by Bryan and College Station school administrators, but not without some disagreement.
Dr. H. R. Burnett, director of instruction of the A&M Consolidated ISD, said, "My feeling is that the Supreme Court meant that there should be no prayer in school."
The only incidents of having advocating of religion in the schools that he could remember were the passing out of Gideon Bibles around 1963 and a scripture box on a teacher's desk from which a student drew a scripture and read it each morning — sometime around 1973. Both practices were stopped, Burnett said.
He added that even though he feels the court ruling means no religious practices can be condoned in the classroom now, he feels that "someday it might be ruled in favor of."

Dr. Guy Gorden, director of instruction of the Bryan ISD for the past two years, said there has been no mention of religion in the classroom since he has been here. If the situation came up, he said, "I would take the position of separation of church and state as much as possible."
William K. Summers, superintendent of the Bryan ISD, said if a religious exercise "infringes on someone else's rights, I would oppose it. We

are trying," he said, "to do what we are doing within the law."
"There is no formalized policy that goes on in the schools," he said. "I don't think we recognize the community in is by-and-large a religious community."
On the other hand, Dr. Reagor, president of the Consolidated ISD board of public schools, said he was in favor of prayer in public schools.
"Personally," he said, "I think there's a thing wrong with raising with a prayer exercise in school. I don't think it's different than starting a game with a prayer."
Reagor said if prayer were recited in the classroom, it would not feel a need to oppose it to my attention.
The case against the Lubbock ISD will come to trial Nov. 3, and administrators must continue to decide for themselves if prayer does not belong in the classroom.
And what do school officials think about being in this position? "Most of them would probably say, 'I don't know,'" Griffith said. "Theological element that would be with the First Amendment school to advocate a particular religious doctrine."
Dr. Harold L. Hawkins, director of Educational Administration, said, "Because schools are local level, and church, school are pillars of society, either happens in school attracts attention from home and becomes an issue."
"There's a discrepancy between what the local community of the local board of education mand, and what the law says what administrators may do is legal."
Administrators are in a situation," Hawkins said, "where the 'wishes and demands' of the community and the board of education and community may be so strong that they may be in a position to either accept what the community makes a major issue out of or correct the problem. It is serious enough to cause him to job."
Religious practices beyond school, Hawkins said, "are challenged, when someone questions the community's authority of certain teachings."

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