

Juveniles tell of threats, abuse, attempts to silence

United Press International
PRYOR, Okla. — Students at a juvenile facility being investigated for child abuse charges said they were warned not to tell anything during a senator's visit, and two boys claim they were whipped for wanting to talk with reporters.

Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., armed with complaints from state juvenile institution students detailing prostitution rings, rampant sexual abuse and drug use and dealing by employees, toured Whitaker State Children's Home Wednesday. After Nickles left the home, four boys found the opportunity to talk about their life at the institution and said school employees had warned them not to talk with the senator or reporters with him.

"They (school officials) told (a student in a class Nickles visited) not to say anything," the 16-year-old said. "He (the student) told them (Nickles and an aide) this morning Whitaker was a real good place. That ain't true."

While Nickles was on campus,

acting Superintendent Steve Scott said no school officials had told students of the pending visit. He said school officials and students learned of the tour through the media.

But some teenage boys who talked about the school Wednesday said they had been told be-

Tony and Tim, 14, claimed they were spanked Tuesday, and Tim again Wednesday, because they told a teacher they planned to talk with reporters.

forehand of the visit and threatened when they told teachers they wanted to make public statements.

Scott refused to allow reporters to meet with students Wednesday.

"No, I don't have authorization," he said. "The only persons

that really can have direct contact with students without permission are those actively involved in their care and custody: social workers, people who are employed by the institution, their attorney, the court and their parents."

Tony and Tim, 14, claimed they were spanked Tuesday, and Tim again Wednesday, because they told a teacher they planned to talk with reporters.

A teacher confronted Tony when he refused to do extra gym class exercises, he said. After the refusal, teachers asked Tim and Tony "are we going to do it the easy way or the hard way?" Tony said.

"The easy way was to (do the exercises), and the hard way was to go in the office and get swats," he said.

"So after that I said 'I'll take it the easy way but I can't wait until the reporters come tomorrow.' And so the teacher took me in the back and said 'Well, you're going to take it the hard way then.'"

"He started poking me in my chest, and pulling my hair and stuff."

Tim said he also was treated roughly for the same reason.

The boys told of a student who was dragged across campus and his arm broken, the youths claimed, because he refused to

answer questions posed by security officers.

Scott said two security officers accused of breaking a boy's arm some 10 months ago were fired last month for charges of ignoring institutional disciplinary rules during a confrontation with two 15-year-old girls. He would not specify what happened.

"The kids we have here are emotionally disturbed or borderline retarded, but cannot be maintained in a mental retardation institution (or) facility because of their nature to act out or be aggressive," Scott said.

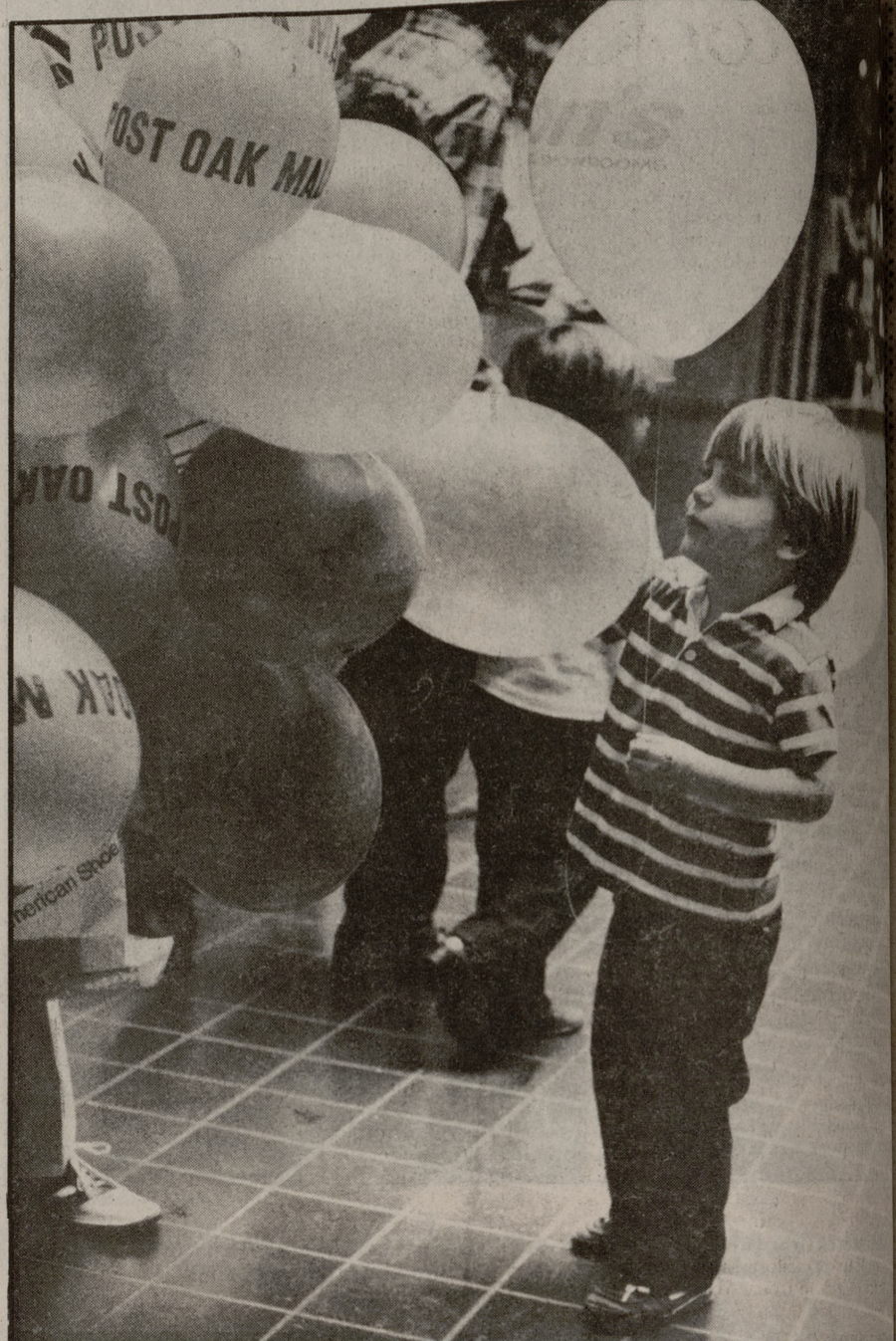
"Many of the kids we have here have been physically or sexually abused in their own homes. Some have intellectual limitations that their parents or communities cannot address."

The official said he was not surprised some youths housed in juvenile facilities had made allegations of abuses and illegal activities within the institutions.

The students, ignored at home and sent away to an institution, respond to someone who asks if they are treated unfairly, Scott said.

"The kid is going to latch on to that as somebody coming in and saying 'I'm going to help you; I'm going to get you out of here,'" he said.

Scott said the students "may exaggerate."



One more, please

Adam Mikeal, 4, searches for the perfect balloon to add to his collection. Mikeal was at the opening of Post Oak Mall his mother, Belinda, on Wednesday.

Secretary of state defers action on complaint

United Press International
AUSTIN — Secretary of State David Dean says he is required by law to defer action on Comptroller Bob Bullock's complaint that a Republican opponent may have violated the state election code.

Bullock complained Wednesday that Mike Richards failed to respond to charges that he may have violated election laws by soliciting and accepting campaign contributions before naming a campaign treasurer.

In a letter to Dean, Bullock said the 15-day response period given to Richards had passed and inquired what action would be taken by the secretary of state.

Dean, however, distributed a

copy of a letter in which he told Bullock that state law prohibits him from forwarding such complaints to the prosecuting attorney or attorney general as long as Richards is involved in a campaign.

"Therefore, you are advised that pursuant to the above statutory provisions, I will take no action with regards to your complaint until Mike Richards is no longer engaged in the campaign for comptroller of public accounts," Dean said.

Tony Proffitt, an aide in the Bullock campaign, indicated Bullock may not be willing to wait until the end of the campaign for action against Richards.

"We have some other options," Proffitt said. "The real

question is, did Mike Richards send in a response, and if we are going to get to look at it."

In other political news, agriculture commissioner date Jim Hightower says his challenge for a debate incumbent Reagan Brown.

In a letter to Brown Wednesday, Hightower says six possible dates for a debate between the two Democratic candidates, and said he would rearrange his schedule to accommodate any debate date agreed upon.

An aide to Brown said he had sent a challenge Hightower at a news conference Tuesday saying it was not a "general way" to issue such a challenge.

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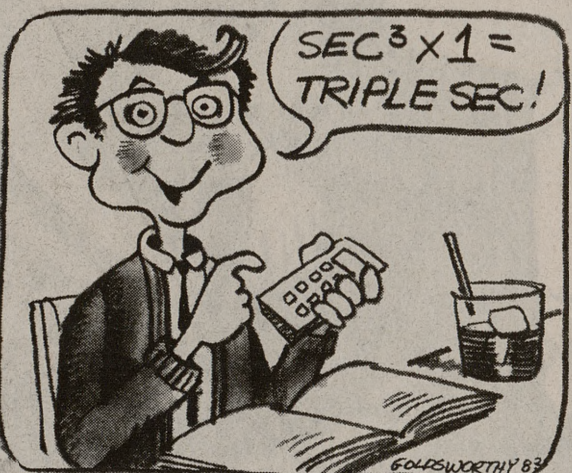
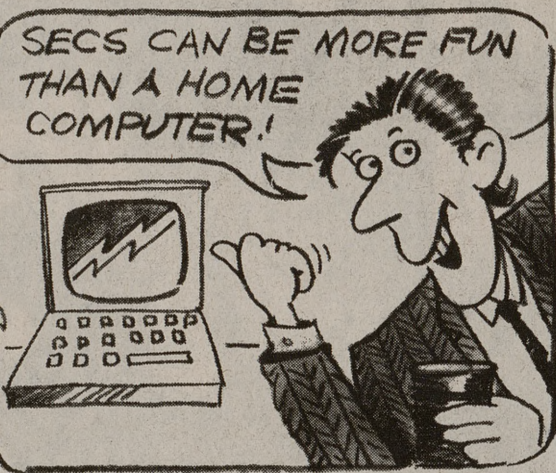
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