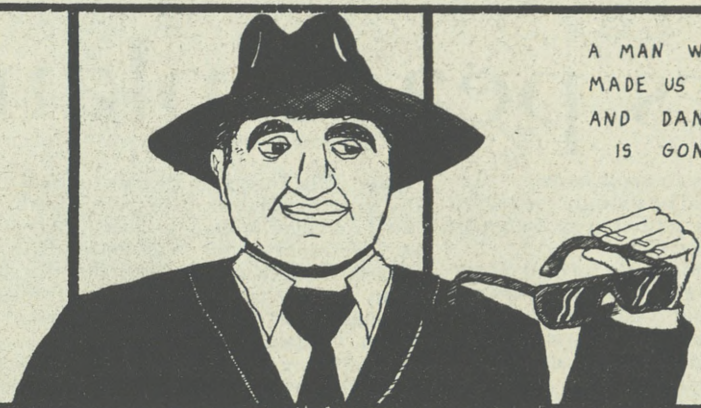


Warped

By Scott McCullar

New council keeps states abreast of railroad's demise



A MAN WHO
MADE US LAUGH
AND DANCE
IS GONE...

...AND WE ARE
SAD

United Press International
OKLAHOMA CITY — Representatives from a dozen states affected by the shutdown of the Rock Island Railroad have formed a coalition to keep informed on new developments in the railroad's liquidation.

delivered a strong address on the need for the railroads. He said the nation's railroads are vital to defense and their demise could spark another acute energy crisis.

Delegates from 12 of the 13 states affected by the bankruptcy formed the "Rock Island States Council" Friday on the closing day of the meeting. The council will consist of a governor's appointee from each of the states.

The council, the idea of Kansas Gov. John Carlin, will be charged with keeping members abreast of developments in the railroad's liquidation.

Also Friday, Oklahoma Corporation Commissioner Jim Townsend, a former locomotive engineer and state rail planner,

Dealers say trend won't last

Surplus gas drops price

United Press International
A gasoline surplus in the Southwest has driven prices at the pumps down to less than \$1 a gallon in some areas, but dealers and suppliers are not optimistic the competitive price trend will continue.

Reported prices range from a low of 96.9 cents in St. Louis to 99.9 in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Colorado to a few cents more than a dollar in Louisiana and Kansas — numbers that have not been seen at the pumps in almost two years.

"Based on what we can see, the lower price is because of decreased consumption because of conservation, more fuel efficient cars and the decontrol of oil," Larry Boccarossa of the Arkansas Petroleum Council said.

"We're seeing more supplies of crude oil and gasoline. It looks like to me this is creating more competition in the market."

The low prices first appeared in Texas near Houston late last month when a Channelview truck stop lowered its price to 99.9 cents and reported record business.

Then in Cedar Hill, south of Dallas, two brothers who anticipated the coming low prices forged ahead at their small gasoline-selling grocery by dropping their price to 99.9.

Bill Ligon, managing director of the Texas Service Station Association, said the low prices are only sales promotions.

Ligon said wholesale prices dropped two to four cents a gallon this week, and he expected prices in Texas to keep going down until May. He predicted prices will go back up when the surplus is gone.

"I think in June they'll be going back up," Ligon said. "At the pump, branded gas will probably get down to about \$1.05, and unbranded down to about 98 cents to \$1."

"I sure don't think it's going to stay this low unless dealers want to sell it for less they are paying for it. The guy I talked to last week who was selling it for 99.9 was selling it for 3 cents a

gallon less than he was buying it for. He just did it about four days.

"When they get this surplus eaten up, you're going to see the price going up again."

A spokesman for a group of Oklahoma stations charging

"When they get this surplus eaten up, you're going to see the price going up again," — Bill Ligon, managing director, Texas Service Station Association.

99.9 cents a gallon said they were not losing money at that price. Wyatt Phillips, vice president of marketing for Quik Trip, said the company dropped the price to 99.9 at 10 of 39 stations in Tulsa and two in Miami, Okla.

"We saw it going below a dollar and we wanted to be first," Phillips said.

Janelle McCammon at Cities Service Co. said the company lowered prices at four of the 10 Tulsa Quik Mart stations.

"It was in response to the competition," McCammon said.

In Oklahoma City, Gary Beel, who operates 10 Gas-n-Go stations, said operators are in a bind because of an immense oversupply. His stations are selling regular at about \$1.03, but he figured he only makes about one penny per gallon.

"We're not making any

money, we're losing money," Beel said. "The pressure is on us. We just can't physically sell the surplus. If you bought the biggest gas hog you could find it still wouldn't guzzle gas like it did five years ago."

Al Carroll, spokesman for the Bayou State Retailers Association in Shreveport, La. said he has not heard of any prices below \$1, but some are as low as \$1.04.

Carroll said he saw competitive trends favoring independent dealers.

"The independents can sell at a much lower price than the branded dealers can because the oil companies do not have the mechanics to move in their accounting departments as fast as the independents do," Carroll said.

"I think it's turned into a cat and mouse game. If the independents move first, the majors are going to move and force them on down just to see how low they can go."

In St. Louis, prices ranged from \$1 to \$1.03 per gallon earlier this week, but Thursday 12 Mars Oil Co. stations began selling regular leaded gasoline for 96.9 cents a gallon. Mars stations in Denver lowered their pump price to 99.9 cents.

It is the first time since September 1980 that gas prices in St. Louis have been below \$1.

"We had a very large supply and we decided to pass the savings on to our customers," said Herbert Wolkowitz, Mars presi-

dent. "We like to do a lot of business. What else can I tell you?"

ENGINEERS

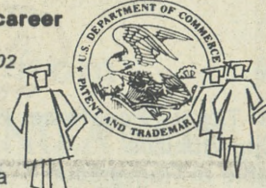
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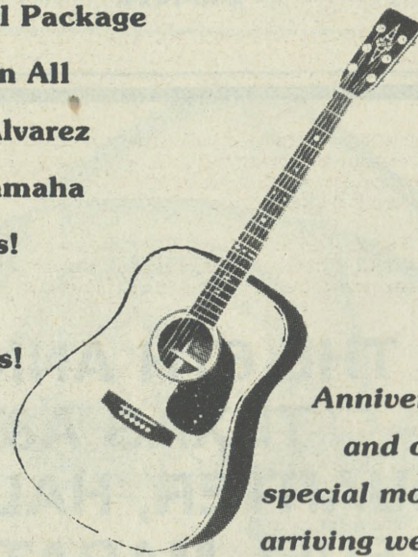
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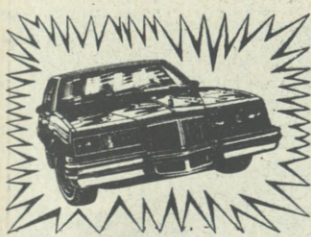
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