

Clements calls bill a solution

United Press International
AUSTIN — Gov. Bill Clements said a bill approved by a House committee is a permanent solution to the unemployment compensation fund problem.

"It's not a Band-Aid," he said Tuesday, the opening day of the special session.

In the bill, taxes paid by most Texas employers would increase by about 300 percent — far less than the 2,000 percent hike anticipated.

A House committee voted in favor of the bill by House Speaker Bill Clayton that would allow the state to borrow an unspecified amount of money from the federal government to keep the fund solvent and to assess a surtax on employers to pay as much as \$40 million in interest on the loan.

If the legislature approves Clayton's bill, it would be the first time in history that Texas has borrowed from the federal government under a 1938 New Deal program that provided state unemployment funds.

The bill, to be considered by the House today, will raise the tax rate for most Texas employers would be raised from 0.1 percent to 0.3 percent.

"It will certainly be an increase over what is in place now for employers of Texas," said Clayton, D-Springlake. "But it will certainly be a decrease over what employers would have to pay if we didn't act now."

Most legislators have said they favored a long-term solution to the fund's problems rather than a one-time bailout. "This part of our system is sick," said Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur. "The question is whether we hold our noses and take a dose of castor oil or wait awhile and undergo major surgery."

In addition to providing for the loan and interest payments, Clayton's bill would set a \$500 million ceiling and a \$225 million floor on the fund. Employers would pay more taxes for every \$45 million the fund balance fell below the floor and less taxes for every \$45 million the fund balance exceeded the ceiling.

The bill also would increase the maximum tax rate from 0.4 percent to 0.6 percent, increase the annual penalty rate on late payments from 12 percent to 18 percent, and raise the employee wage base on which taxes are levied from \$6,000 to \$7,000.

Using satellites, photos to find oil

Exotic oil-finding methods studied

United Press International
DALLAS — What sound like exotic methods to find oil — satellite photography and studying the bottom of the ocean — could eventually be the most cost-effective methods, a participant of a petroleum exploration symposium says.

A two-day conference at the Fairmont Hotel sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Earth and Man at Southern

Methodist University beginning Wednesday will consider such unconventional methods of finding oil.

About 130 oil industry representatives, some from as far away as France and Great Britain, were expected to attend.

Doris Ainsworth, a spokeswoman for the third annual symposium on "Unconventional Methods in Exploration for Petroleum and Natural Gas," said

current economic conditions make new and cheaper methods of finding fuel a necessity.

"I think the whole point of some of these unconventional methods is that they are cheaper than the ways we are finding oil now," she said.

"They are exotic. That's why researchers have a hard time selling them to industry. What they (the researchers) need to do

is to try to change the mindset, to show that some of these ways are not only cheaper, but better."

Dr. Philip Abelson, editor of Science magazine, was scheduled to give the keynote address today on "The Future of Methane as an Energy Source."

Topics to be presented in case study format included the use of satellites and magnetic fields in the search for oil, as well as tech-

niques to measure upper migration of water and gravitational forces.

Even botany will be represented, Ainsworth said. Geobotanist Mary C. Dalziel of the U.S. Geological Survey office in Flagstaff, Arizona, was scheduled to present a case study on "finding oil in an area of Montana based on the metallic anomalies of sage and pine trees."

Methane tops list for future energy

United Press International
DALLAS — Methane, the waste product that ignites coal mine explosions and is flared off by refineries, will become more important than petroleum, the editor of Science magazine predicted Wednesday.

"I'm certain that within 15 years," editor Philip Abelson said in preliminary remarks at a two-day symposium on exotic energy sources, "there will be more methane gas produced domestically than petroleum. Its value will be enormous."

"This is the same stuff that they were flaring away," he said. "Who needed it? Who wanted to look for it? But the high price of oil has made methane a lot more economical and now the search is on."

He said Soviet methane reserves are far greater than the energy equivalent of oil in Saudi Arabia, hence the Soviet pipeline controversy.

"The gas gives them (the Russians) tremendous potential," he said.

Abelson said methane occurs naturally almost everywhere there is decayed organic matter.

"One thing about methane is that it can be found practically everywhere in the sedimentary basins," he said. "It's more widespread in occurrence than oil. That's why, for example, you

have coal mine explosions. In the earth, the gas mixes with coal dust and is highly explosive.

"Many regions where organized matter has laid down gave rise to methane rather than petroleum," he said. Despite its explosive nature, he said, "it's safer to handle than light hydrocarbons such as gasoline."

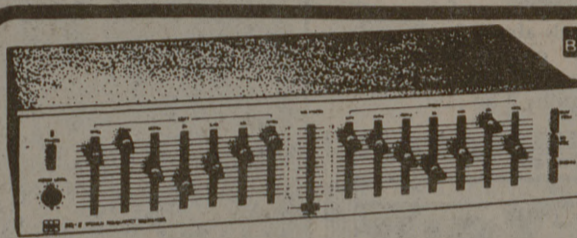
Abelson said companies have been reluctant to invest in artificial methane, usually created from coal.

"The investment involved in such a plant would be in the billions of dollars," he said. "And we have yet to build the first one, although one has been started in North Dakota. One of those deals may take eight to 10 years."

"The advantage of natural methane gas is that you can drill a well and with the distribution pipelines be on line within a week or two.

"It is much easier to purify than oil and as a fuel. It is much more clean burning. People are only gradually gaining an awareness of the value of the stuff, and yet it is energy source of the future."

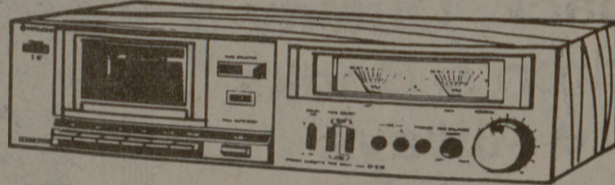
About 130 oil industry representatives, including some from France and Great Britain, are expected to participate in the symposium, sponsored by Southern Methodist University.



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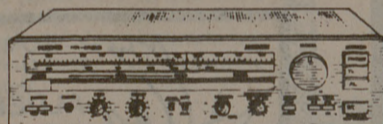
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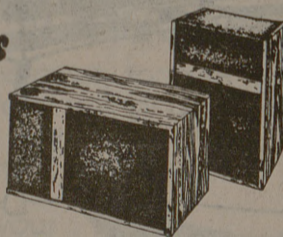
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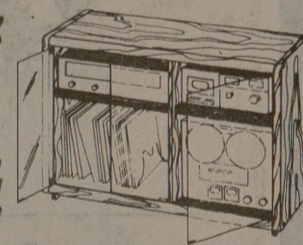
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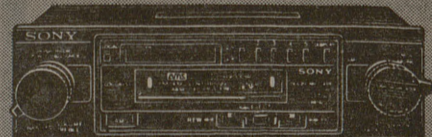
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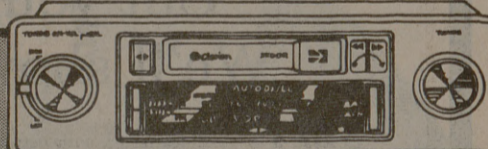
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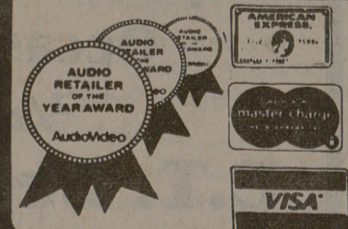


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