

Border cities lead Texas unemployed

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United Press International
AUSTIN — Mexican border cities, where trade has fallen drastically because of the unstable peso, continued to lead the state in unemployment, with one-fourth of those eligible to work jobless in Laredo.

The Texas Employment Commission earlier this month said the statewide unemployment rate for October was 8.3 percent, down slightly from 8.4 percent in September. Most Texas cities showed a similar small improvement.

The unemployment rate in Bryan-College Station is 5.2 and Austin experienced the lowest rate at 4.0 percent.

"Most of them (city rates) went down a half percentage point or less," TEC spokesman Diane Dobie said. "There were a few that had larger decreases."

South Texas border towns had the highest jobless rates with Laredo at 23.5 percent, the McAllen area at 19.8 percent and the Brownsville area at 14.8 percent. The high rates were blamed in large part on the effects of the Mexican peso devaluation, although the Brownsville area rate did show improvement.

"Brownsville-Harlingen-San Benito was down a full percentage point (from September), although their rate was still quite

high," Dobie said. "Their unemployment rate jumped up so high in September because of the devaluation of the peso showing up for the first time in our figures. Maybe they are bouncing back a little."

Rates for other Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas were: Abilene 4.5 percent; Amarillo 5.0; Beaumont-Port Arthur-Orange 12.1; Corpus Christi 7.8; Dallas-Fort Worth 5.9; El Paso 12.0; Galveston-Texas City 11.3; Houston 8.0; Killeen-Temple 5.3; Longview-Marshall 12.0; Lubbock 5.1; Midland 4.6; Odessa 6.4; San Angelo 5.0; San Antonio 7.2; Sherman-Denison 8.5; Tyler 6.5; Waco 5.9, and Wichita Falls 7.0.

Prison reform plans pushed

United Press International
AUSTIN—Expediting paroles, utilizing work furloughs and placing judges instead of juries in charge of sentencing criminals are among proposals suggested by a state commission charged with developing an approach to alleviating overcrowding in Texas prisons.

The recommendations announced Monday by the panel were scheduled to be formally adopted Tuesday and presented to Gov. Bill Clements.

Clements appointed the panel to study problems within the Texas Department of Corrections, which houses the nation's largest number of inmates and is under a court order to reduce overcrowding and improve inmate conditions.

The TDC has asked the Legislature to appropriate \$1.5 billion for the next two years to pay for increased housing and additional medical care. But the Legislative Budget Board last week recommended the state spend only half that much and Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby characterized the prison system as a financial "bottomless pit."

The bulk of the proposals

aim at staying in compliance with the court order and finding facilities for nearly 4,000 inmates currently housed in tents, including a suggestion to classify future inmates according to the risk they present and that the TDC de-emphasize maximum security facilities.

One of the commission's more controversial recommendations was to leave all sentencing up to judges rather than juries. Such a move, the commission's report said, would reduce disparity in sentences and would provide punishment more appropriate for the crime committed.

Some other suggestions by the panel included:

— Lessening the effect of the habitual criminal statute, which mandates life sentences for those inmates convicted of three felonies.

— Providing alternatives to TDC incarceration for 15 and 16-year-olds who commit serious crimes.

— Increasing sentencing options by allowing work release programs, sentences split between incarceration and probation, and more community corrections facilities.

Space suit test almost finished

United Press International
HOUSTON — Officials with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration say they hope to know by Thursday what went wrong with the \$1 million suits that forced them to cancel space walks on the recently completed space shuttle mission.

A fan failure in Joe Allen's space suit, coupled with a regulator malfunction in astronaut Bill Lenoir's suit, caused NASA officials to cancel a three-hour walk in space last week during the space shuttle Columbia's fifth mission.

NASA spokesman Dave Alter said officials in Windsor Locks, Conn., where United Technologies' Hamilton Standard division is located, tested the fan assembly and found nothing wrong with it.

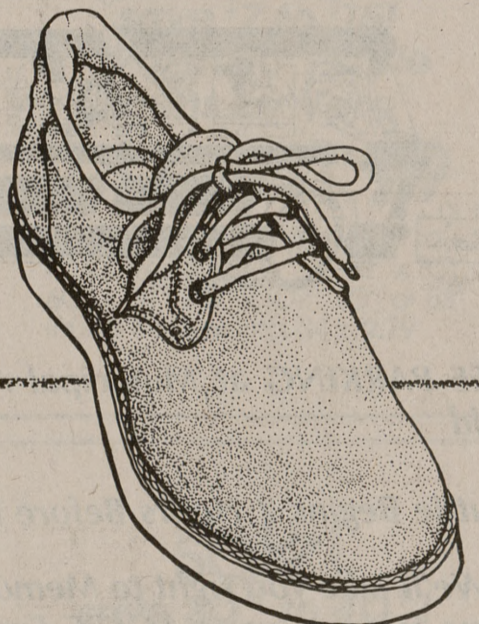
"Now they are doing a detailed electrical check and zeroing in on the motor itself," Alter said. "The have eliminated everything in front of and in

back of the motor. Test technicians and NASA team officials concluded it may be in the motor itself."

Alter said only the malfunctioning parts of the space suits were returned to the manufacturer. A new fan and motor were installed this weekend in Allen's suit "and now it works just fine. His suit is ready to go again," Alter said.

The fan ensures a flow of oxygen through the spacesuit. The regulator in Lenoir's suit, which controls the pressure of air flowing into the suit, is also being tested by Hamilton Standard and in the laboratories of manufacturer Carlton Controls, near Buffalo, N.Y.

"We are just waiting for the sleuths to solve the mystery, but from the way they are going at it, I think I can agree with the head of the inquiry team that they will have an answer by Thanksgiving," Alter said.



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