

Bill would regard juveniles as adult

United Press International
AUSTIN — Juvenile delinquents designated as three-time losers and automatically tried as adults could be robbed of chances to rehabilitate themselves, defense attorneys told a House committee Tuesday.

A bill proposed by Rep. Carlyle Smith, D-Grand Prairie, would require juveniles to be tried as adults if they were convicted of misdemeanor or felony offenses on three previous occasions.

"This places into juvenile law the concept of the three-time loser," Smith told members of the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. "The main thrust is to give the juvenile criminals a little bit more to think about."

The existing law permits juveniles at least 15 years old to be tried as adults only if they are charged with felonies.

Defense attorneys strongly objected to the measure, saying it could result in very young people being sent to the Texas Department of Corrections, where there are few rehabilitation programs for young criminals.

"If a juvenile violated curfew on three different occasions, he could go to TDC," John O'Shea of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association said. "This, I think, would be great injustice."

Greg Gladden, also representing the criminal defense attorneys, said he often encouraged his young clients to

admit their crimes in hope of being rehabilitated through the Texas Youth Council.

"I think passage of this legislation would mutate the way I look at representing a juvenile," Gladden said. "I try to show it's better for him to fess up, but this would make him try to start beating the rap at a really young age."

A Dallas prosecutor also opposed the bill, saying that although a young person was capable of committing heinous crimes, "We shouldn't rub his nose in the dirt for the rest of his life for one or two things he may have done in his youthful years."

The committee voted to send the proposal to a subcommittee for further study.

O'Bryan sends hospital kids books from jail

United Press International
HOUSTON — Ronald Clark O'Bryan, sentenced to death for the 1974 Halloween poisoning of his 8-year-old son, says he has donated 55 children's books to a hospital to show his concern for children.

But a volunteer worker who received the books at Texas Children's Hospital Tuesday said she was skeptical of O'Bryan's motivations in sending the materials.

"We don't mind getting the books. We can always use them. But it's suspicious. What is he trying to gain — a few brownie points to get another stay of execution?" said Jeannine Be-

veridge, office supervisor for the women's auxiliary at Texas Children's Hospital.

"We opened the box, and they're lovely. I'm sure we'll get a lot of use out of them," Beveridge said.

O'Bryan, 38, was sentenced to death by injection for the poisoning of his son, Timothy Marc O'Bryan.

O'Bryan maintains his innocence, but prosecutors claim the former Deer Park optician forced his son to eat cyanide-laced "Giant Pixie Stix" candy to collect insurance money. Investigators found the poisoned candy in the trick-or-treat bags of four other children, including

O'Bryan's daughter, but none of them ate it.

The case is still on appeal.

O'Bryan denies suggestions he donated the children's books to draw sympathy from the public.

"That's not the case. I don't give a damn what people think. It's not a ploy. I thought it was a useful thing to do," O'Bryan said. "It was just a gesture. Kids have always been a favorite of mine. It's something I enjoy doing."

The death row inmate recently said he wanted to send the books as an expression of his concern for children.

Gramm back on Hill, still thinking of budget

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Although Bryan-College Station congressman Phil Gramm has changed his party affiliation with his return to Congress, the federal budget is still very much on his mind.

In fact, Gramm's agenda on his first day back Tuesday included an afternoon meeting with key House Budget Committee members and conversations with White House staffers on the status of President Reagan's new budget.

It was the president's budget — and Gramm's support of it last session — that led to his being thrown off the House Budget Committee by the Democratic leadership and his subsequent decision to resign from Congress and switch parties.

While Gramm, the former Texas A&M economics profes-

sor, returned to the 6th Congressional District to wage a successful campaign to regain his seat as a Republican, House GOP members kept open a slot on the powerful budget committee for him.

"I don't believe there's any precedent in the history of Congress where a committee seat has been held open for someone who's not a member. It was a very generous action on their part," said Gramm.

However, Gramm will be unable to take his seat on the committee or in the 98th Congress formally until his swearing in, postponed until early next week when Congress is in full session, and official notification has been received of his special election victory last weekend.

Gramm, buoyed by his 55.12 percent victory over 10 challengers, had a full agenda Tuesday. He said one of the first tasks was

getting past the news media representatives crowding his office.

"Once I got through all that business, I had a staff meeting to ensure we're all caught up with our casework, things like Aunt Sarah didn't get her Social Security check," he said.

"We have to recognize the problems people have with the government go on whether I'm here or not and make sure those cases are solved."

Gramm said he did not foresee problems working in Congress despite bitter accusations such as one that he spied for Reagan during budget meetings last session.

"I hope I'm big enough to put those things behind me," he said. "There's a job to be done up here."

As a Republican, Gramm also will be on four subcommittees and said he "will get the first seat that opens on Energy and Commerce."

Traffic to Mexico declines

United Press International
U.S. Customs agents report traffic between Mexico and Texas has plummeted by 40 percent — the lowest in recent history — at some border points in recent weeks.

Officials attribute the sharp decline to a crackdown by Mexican authorities on goods Americans can purchase in border cities.

"I've been here for 25 years, and this is the worse I can ever recall," said agent H.M. Rodriguez, a weekend-duty inspector in the city of Eagle Pass, population 19,000. "Back in 1981 I can remember we had hundreds of trucks coming over from Mexico to buy merchandise," he said.

"They were moving tremendous amounts of goods because of the oil money. Now the Mexicans are hurting. There's hardly any commerce. It's real bad."

He estimated that traffic has dropped by 30 to 40 percent in recent weeks, mainly because of restrictions on Americans purchasing Mexican goods.

"They don't let you buy a lot of groceries," Rodriguez said. "There was a run on Mexican dry goods, but not anymore. They (Mexican customs agents) are giving Americans a lot of trouble if they buy certain commodities, mostly food staples. Mexicans implemented stricter export laws a month or two ago, and traffic has really been hurt."

He said the Mexican government subsidizes the marketplace cost of food and other vital commodities to keep them affordable.

"They just can't let Americans take advantage of their nation's hardship," he said.

Mannie Vargas, a customs supervisor in El Paso, estimated that pedestrian traffic had nosedived by roughly 25 percent compared to last year.

"And that's a conservative fi-

gure," he said. "It could be much greater."

He noted that vehicle traffic also was down but by a smaller amount.

"Traffic averaged about 40,000 cars a day before the peso devaluation last year," he said. "Now traffic is running at about 36,000 cars."

The vehicle flow would be far leaner if it weren't for inexpensive Mexican gas, Vargas said.

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