

Bush credits homebuilders for aiding U.S. economy

United Press International

HOUSTON — Vice President George Bush Monday credited the homebuilding industry with aiding in the nation's economic recovery by creating jobs and continuing to build despite a recession.

Bush, addressing the board of directors of the National Association of Home Builders, said for the first time in 20 years, there is strong growth, lower unemployment rates and declining inflation in the United States. "Homebuilders, and indeed this country, have been through

some rough times," Bush said. "You knew that the best way to get the housing industry back on track was to get the economy back on track. You knew that we had to get inflation, interest rates, taxes, regulations and spending all under control before we could again have a prosperity that America could rely on."

Bush said the homebuilding industry helped save consumers millions of dollars by identifying and lobbying to remove regulations considered unnecessary.

"Regulations that were slowly strangling the thrift industry have been eased, too, ensuring that this important source of mortgage money remains vigorous. And restrictions on pension fund investment in mortgages have been loosened,

leading to a 58 percent increase in pension mortgage holdings since 1980," Bush said. "Some say that's enough to finance almost 5.8 million new homes."

Peter Herder, a Tucson, Ariz. homebuilder who Tuesday begins a yearlong term as president of the NAHB, agreed with Bush.

"The vice president's remarks are consistent with the facts. Housing has led this nation out of seven recessions," Herder said.

"In late 1982, as interest rates began to moderate, housing production began to grow and in 1983, more than 1.7 million homes were produced. More than 200,000 jobs were created and billions of dollars pumped into the nation's economy," Herder said.

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Group claims horses starved, mistreated

United Press International

MARLIN — An animal rights group said Monday dozens of horses were dying of negligence in a Central Texas county long before the arrival of the winter freezes that ranchers say killed the animals.

The company Horses Unlimited brought 8,000 to 10,000 horses into Falls County during the past four to six months, officials and ranchers said, as part of a business enterprise in which the animals were to have been fattened, then slaughtered and sold for European consumption.

But People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an animal rights group headquartered in Washington D.C., said more than 20,000 horses actually were brought into the county about 120 miles south of Dallas, many of them in failing health after riding for days in cramped double-deck trailers.

Ingrid Newkirk, director of the group, said at least 100 of the horses have died from starvation, some of them long before freezing weather wiped out available pasturage.

Last week a "Save the Horses" fund was created to collect cash and hay to feed the animals. A Falls County grand jury also has launched

an investigation into the operations of Horses Unlimited.

Local ranchers who contracted to buy the horses, feed them on their land and then re-sell them to Horses Unlimited prompted the grand jury investigation. The same ranchers claimed they began losing money on the deal when the bitter cold in December wiped out grass, oats and other pasturage.

But Newkirk said the ranchers had accepted the animals in poor health, then failed to care for them.

"This about the freeze is a great big coverup on their part," she said. "Anyone could see we were in for a rough winter. They just hoped they could get by without providing extra feed for the animals."

Newkirk said investigators for the group had been in Falls County for 10 weeks observing the "wretched conditions the animals live and die in."

PETA chairman Alex Pacheco, who has been in Marlin since November, said he took photographs of malnourished and injured animals that were left to die in the fields before the freezes hit.

In one case, he said, a videotape was made before the December freeze of a horse that nearly drowned in

mud because it was too weak to stand.

Newkirk said Pacheco and other PETA workers had tried to aid the animals but were threatened with arrest by the Falls County authorities.

In other instances, she said, they asked land owners to destroy suffering animals but were refused.

"These horses are inconsequential to people who are trying to make a quick buck," she said.

Newkirk said her group had prepared a report on the situation in Marlin and planned to distribute it to several congressional offices on Tuesday.

Falls County District Attorney Tom Sehon said Horses Unlimited was formed last spring by Roland Jones Jr. and R.D. "Big Shot" Plunkett, owner of a Marlin tack and veterinary store.

The company bought horses at auctions nationwide, then sold them to Marlin-area ranchers for \$300 to \$350 a head. The sales contracts allegedly called for the company to buy the horses back after a specified period for the full purchase price, plus \$1 a day in pasturage fees for each day the animals were kept.

Local landowners said about two dozen ranchers invested in the enterprise.

Sam Houston University names Dan Rather honorary letterman

United Press International

HUNTSVILLE — More than 33 years after failing to make the Sam Houston State Teachers College football team,

CBS news anchor Dan Rather Monday was named an honorary football letterman.

Officials at the east Texas school now named Sam Houston State University said they

bestowed the honor in response to comments Rather and CBS football commentator Phyllis George made prior to the Super Bowl Sunday.

George noted during the telecast that Rather had been a football player at Sam Houston State. In his autobiography, "The Camera Never Blinks," Rather wrote that he cried when he failed to make the team and win a scholarship in 1950.

"It's was one of the few times in my life I can remember crying," Rather wrote. "I knew nothing about defense. Beyond that I lacked speed and couldn't block."

Rather wrote that he worked out with the team during spring training and early fall practice in 1950.

Rather says that he quit the team after the coach, "in a fit of conscience," convinced him his efforts were useless.

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