

STATE AND LOCAL

New telephone prefix marks updating of service

By **PATRICE KORANEK**
Staff Writer

The increasing use of home computers and the developing high technology industry in the Bryan-College Station area is causing some changes in local telephone service. The current electronic switching systems are being replaced by more

efficient digital switching systems. The first digital switching systems, which use fiber optics instead of copper cable, were put into operation in December 1983. The changeover is scheduled to be completed by early 1987. Digital switching systems make the marriage of computers and telephones more compatible. A direct result of the new switch-

ing systems that the customers will see is a change in phone number prefixes. The changes, scheduled to begin in November, will take place in two areas. One is the area east of Texas A&M, bounded roughly by Carter Creek on the south and Old Reliance Road on the north which will receive a 776 prefix. The other area is south of campus surrounding

the city of Wellborn beyond College Station which will receive a 690 prefix. "Changing the numbers will not improve service, but it is a necessary part to implementing a new switching system which will make service more efficient," said John Wallace, local public affairs manager for General Telephone Co. "When the

change is completed we will have the latest state-of-the-art switching equipment of anyone in the country." To keep the number of changes down, Wallace said, phones installed in those areas already are receiving the new prefixes. Wallace said the cost of making

the change in systems and numbers will be about \$40 million. "The cost won't be directly tied to the rates, but obviously it is a cost of our doing business," he said. The changes are part of the company's overall capital improvement program and the money comes through those funds, he said.

Senator Caperton appointed to key state committees

By **ANN CERVENKA**
Staff Writer

Senator Kent A. Caperton, a Democrat from Bryan-College Station and a 1971 graduate of Texas A&M, has been appointed by Lieutenant Governor William P. Hobby to three key committees for the 69th session of the Texas Legislature. Caperton will chair the newly created Committee on Criminal Justice, and will also serve on the Finance and Education Committees. "I am pleased and honored, since these committees will be addressing some of the most important issues faced by the current Legislature," Caperton said. In general, the committees do the technical work and research before discussion on the floor. "The com-

mittee system is basically where the work of the Senate takes place," he said. More specifically, the Committee on Criminal Justice deals with legislation concerning the Texas Department of Corrections and all matters pertaining to the Criminal Justice System. The committee will deal with all aspects of criminal justice. "My goal is to allow a comprehensive look at the criminal justice system," he said. The Education Committee will be largely responsible for reviewing the Reform Package, which passed in 1984. The Reform Package proposes to reduce classroom sizes, increase teacher salaries and require athletes in public schools to maintain at least a 70 percent average.



Kent Caperton

The committee will also try to solve the problem of inequalities between the rich and poor school districts, the Senator said. The Finance Committee, on which Caperton served during the previous session, reviews all budgetary requests. "The main goal of the committee is to fund a state government without a tax increase," Caperton said. Caperton said his appointments "will put me in an excellent position to represent the interests of the 5th District."

Computer demonstration to mark students' academic proficiency

By **LYNN RAE POVEC**
Staff Writer

The Department of Educational Technology is sponsoring a computer demonstration through noon today. The mobile unit is set up behind J.R. Thompson Hall near the Harrington Education Center Complex. The United States branch of DEGEM Systems Ltd., a company that develops and manufactures educational systems for all levels

of learning, developed the system in Israel. The first one was installed in October 1977. The system's aim is to provide students self-paced instruction in math, typing, computer programming and English as a second language. The system's keyboard is a simple one of about 25 keys, and each user is assigned a number code that will give him access to the system.

"Students can go at their own speed in each different topic," said Dr. Roberta Stock, who is assisting DEGEM Systems with the computer. Moshe Zinman, director of the U.S. branch of DEGEM, explained that teachers can obtain a print out of the level at which each student is operating, and they can use the data to gauge students' progress.

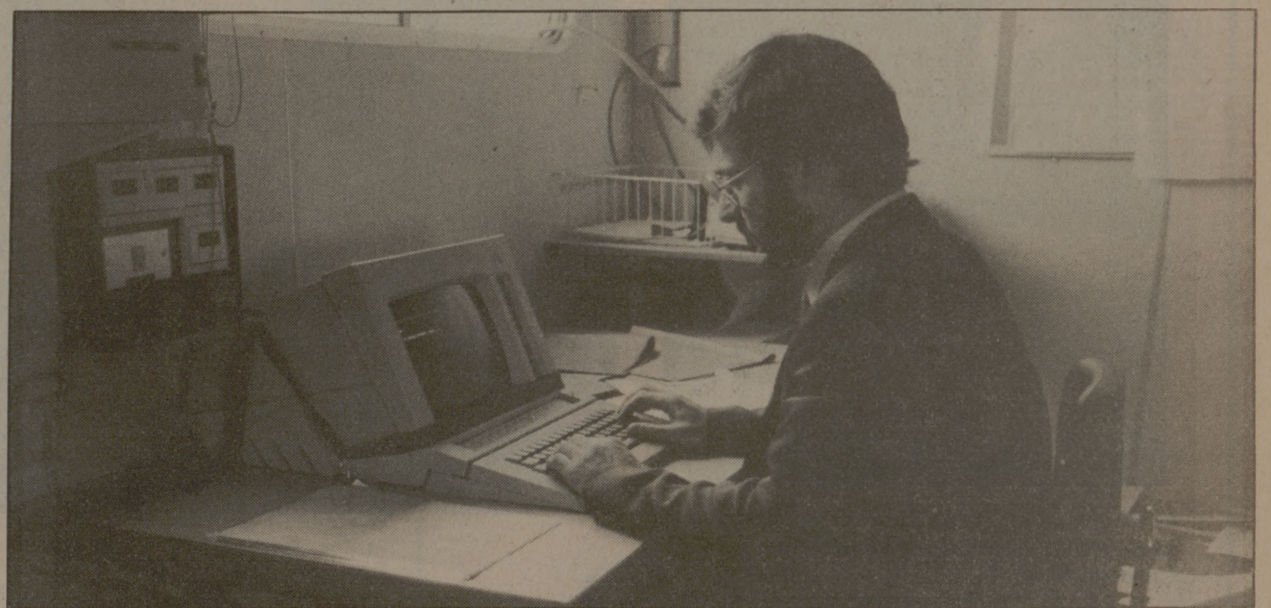
Proposal would allow King's birthday to be optional holiday for state workers

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The birthday of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. should be an optional state holiday available to state workers who prefer to honor King than Christopher Columbus, a Houston lawmaker said Tuesday. "I don't want to be in the posture of forcing people to observe King's birthday," Rep. Ron Wilson said at a news conference.

His proposal would allow state workers to take King's birthday — which was Tuesday — as a holiday instead of Columbus Day, the second Monday in October. King's birthday is a holiday in at least 15 states. Beginning next year, the third Monday in January becomes a federal holiday honoring King's memory. Wilson is making his third push for a state holiday for King. The Houston legislator said the proposal

has never been a "priority" with many lawmakers. "We passed a bill which allows us to observe June 19 (Juneteenth)," Wilson said. "That satisfied the conscience of some members of the House and Senate and the leadership that there was a holiday for black Americans." Wilson said he wants to keep the designated holidays, but only allow state workers to choose a reduced amount from that list.



Gideon Nimoy works at the master computer.

Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

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