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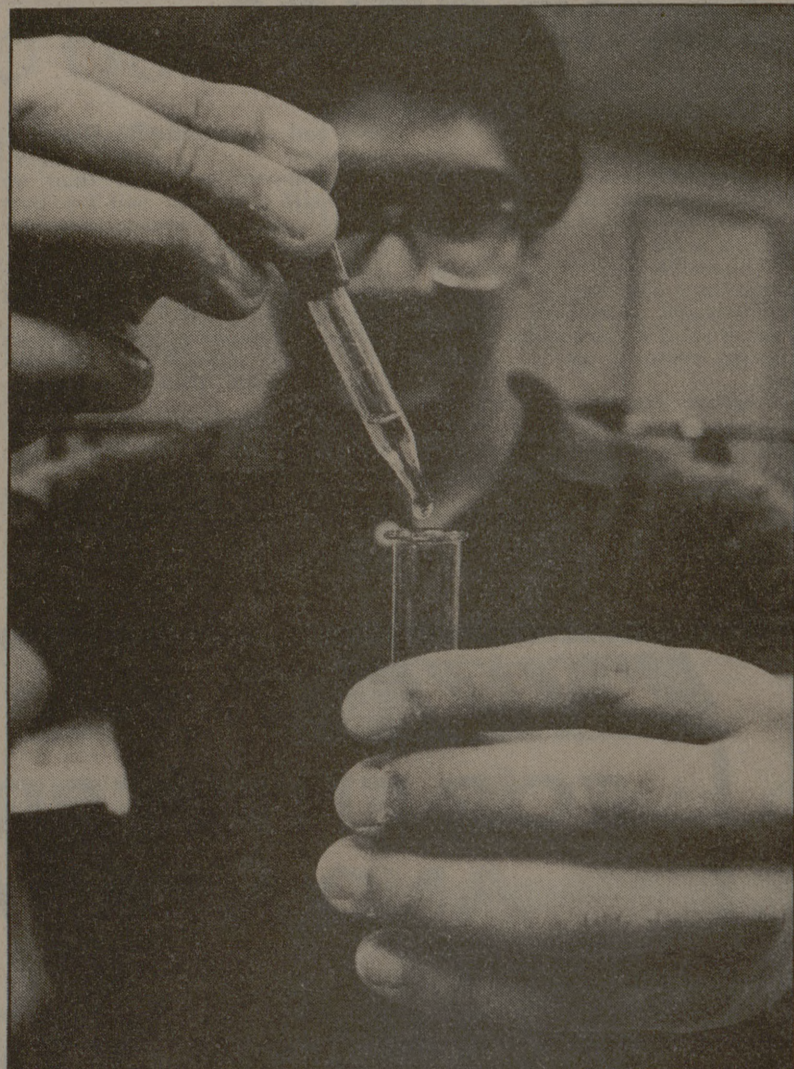


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?
No foul play here. Alex Enriquez, a freshman from Kirbyville, is just observing chemical reactions Wednesday to find out what solution he has in the test tube for a beginning chemistry class.

Executions

States carrying out penalty at an increasing rate in '85

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For the past 20 years, executions in the nation were rarities. Now they occur, on average, once every 10 days — and that rate is speeding up.

James David Raulerson, who died in Florida's electric chair Wednesday, was the fifth person executed in the United States this year.

Law enforcement officials are reluctant to predict how many condemned murderers will die this year, but scores of death row inmates are perilously close to losing their battles to stay alive.

There were 11 executions in the first seven years after the Supreme Court in 1976 allowed states to reinstate capital punishment. In the last 21 weeks, however, there were 15.

At first, time was on the side of the inmates. There was only one execution in 1977; none in 1978; two in 1979; none in 1980; one in 1981; two in 1982; and five in 1983.

But last year, states put 21 inmates to death. Now, in the first 30 days of 1985, five have been executed.

A sixth inmate who was scheduled for execution Wednesday in Florida was granted an indefinite stay Tuesday by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta.

The increase has been welcomed by law enforcement officials who argue that the death penalty is more likely to deter crime if enforced regularly.

"I can't prove it but I believe it," said Georgia Attorney General Michael Bowers.

The Supreme Court, expressing growing impatience with an appeals process that has helped keep hundreds of death row prisoners alive years after their convictions, has played an important role in the current speedup.

In July 1983, the justices ruled federal appeals courts may take short cuts to reject last-ditch efforts to postpone executions. The court said an appeals panel — rather than routinely postponing executions — may deny a postponement by deciding that the issues in the underlying appeal are without merit.

An overwhelming majority of Americans supports capital punishment, and it is anyone's guess whether that public sentiment will change if executions become significantly more frequent.

A Media General-Associated Press survey released earlier this week showed that an unprecedented 84 percent of Americans approve of the death penalty, even though half of those believe the death sentence is not imposed fairly from case to case.

3 new bills introduced to change tax system

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Agreeing that Americans need still-lower tax rates and that President Reagan's solid support is necessary, members of Congress on Wednesday introduced three plans to make sweeping changes in the federal income tax.

The bills share one major goal: all three would reduce individual tax rates although sponsors have different ideas on how to reach those goals.

At one news conference Wednesday, Sen. Bill Bradley, D-N.J., Rep. Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., Rep. Jack Kemp, R-N.Y., and his co-sponsor, Sen. Robert Kasten, R-Wis., appeared side by side urging support for their different plans. A second news conference provided a forum for Sens. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., and Steven Symms, R-Idaho, to spell out their proposal.

Like most politicians, the president is on record favoring a tax system that is fairer and simpler than the present one.

Tax overhaul is taking a backseat on Capitol Hill while the lawmakers look for ways to reduce the federal deficit.

But that does not deter sponsors of tax proposals from public discussion of their ideas.

Here are key provisions affecting individuals:

- Bradley-Gephardt would compress the present tax-rate structure (15 rates for single people, 14 for joint returns, ranging from 11 percent to 50 percent) into three — 14 percent, 26 percent and 30 percent. Sponsors say three-quarters of taxpayers would pay only the 14 percent rate.
- Numerous deductions would be eliminated; those that remained would be applied only against the 14 percent rate. Personal exemptions and standard deductions would be increased. The first \$11,200 earned by a four-member family would be tax-free. Automatic annual tax cuts to offset inflation would be repealed.
- Kemp-Kasten features a single 24 percent tax rate, but in effect there would be a two-rate structure because the first 20 percent of wages subject to Social Security tax — \$39,600 this year — would be exempt from income taxes at most income levels. Exemptions and standard deductions would be raised. A four-member family's first \$12,540 would be exempt. Automatic annual tax reductions would be retained.
- The plan outlined by DeConcini and Symms is a true "flat tax" because a single 19 percent tax rate would apply to all taxable income.

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