

WORLD AND NATION

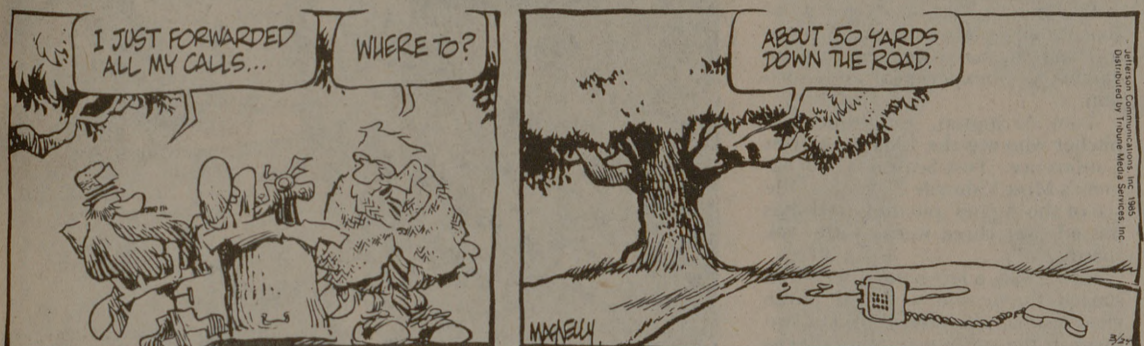
Funky Winkerbean

by Tom Batiuk



SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



Contractors asked to return excess profits to Air Force

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Air Force Secretary Verne Orr, citing results of an internal Pentagon audit, has asked two of the nation's largest defense contractors to voluntarily refund more than \$200 million worth of "unreasonable profits," according to letters released Thursday.

Orr, in letters dated March 15, told chief executives of United Technologies Corp. and General Electric Co. of the audit results and his request for "a voluntary refund." The letters said Pentagon auditors determined that the firms "realized profits that were significantly in excess of those negotiated by the government" in providing parts for jet engines between 1978 and 1983.

In another development, Orr announced that the Air Force has temporarily suspended General Electric from obtaining any new contracts with the Department of Defense.

Orr said the suspension was based upon an indictment returned by a federal grand jury Tuesday in Philadelphia, alleging that GE had defrauded the government of about \$800,000 on a nuclear warhead system.

Regarding the jet engines, Orr said, the auditors calculated that the Pratt & Whitney Division of United Technologies was paid about \$40 million in excess profits, while General Electric was paid \$168 million in excess profits.

The Pentagon later released a copy of the audit that fixes the precise amount of "greater than negotiated profit" at \$38 million for United Technologies and \$167 million for GE.

According to a summary of the inspector general's audit report, the excess profits were paid to both firms in part because inflation rates were lower than originally anticipated in 1982 and 1983.

As for GE, the auditors also reported the firm had received "higher than negotiated profits whenever deliveries were made ahead of schedule" and also because the negotiated rates for overhead expenses "were significantly higher than the actual indirect rates subsequently experienced."

Brian H. Rowe, senior vice president in charge of GE's Aircraft Engine Group said: "The government did not pay 1 cent more than it contracted to pay for the parts in question."

Lower inflation, efficiency extends Medicare trust fund

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Social Security's trustees said Thursday that Medicare's hospital insurance trust fund is not likely to run out before 1998, seven years later than their earlier forecast.

Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret M. Heckler attributed the turnaround in Medicare's fortunes to lower inflation and increased efficiency by physicians and hospitals. She said government reforms that changed the way Medicare pays hospitals' and doctors' bills also deserve some credit.

But she cautioned that Medicare — which helps provide care for 27 million elderly people and almost 3 million disabled — still has a long way to go to avoid a fiscal crisis in the next century. Solutions will require "good faith and strong medicine in the months and years ahead," she said.

Part of the medicine the Reagan administration is seeking is a one-year freeze in 1986 on the fixed rates that Medicare pays hospitals and physicians to treat various ailments. Under the so-called prospective payment system adopted in 1983, Medicare pays hospitals set fees to treat various illnesses, regardless of how long — or short — the individual patient's stay is.

The trustees include Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III and Heckler.

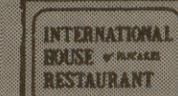
The trustees also gave a clean bill of health to the old age, survivors and disability insurance trust funds, saying they should be able to pay all "benefits on time well into the next century" under expected economic conditions.

However, they said the disability fund could have trouble paying benefits on time by the end of 1987 under adverse economic conditions. The Reagan administration imposed a moratorium on disability cutoffs last April, after some courts had ordered the reviews halted and many governors had refused to carry them out.

Consequently, there were more people were added to the disability program in 1984 than left the rolls, marking the first growth since 1978. The disability program paid out \$1.2 billion more than it took in.

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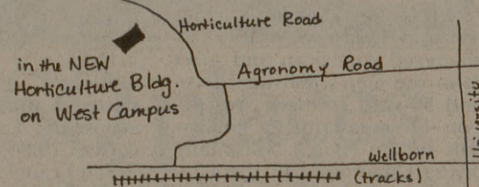
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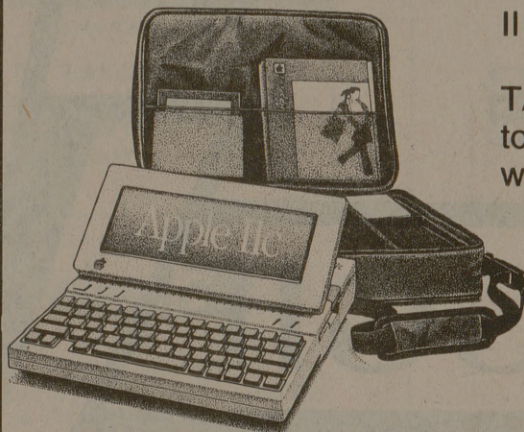
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