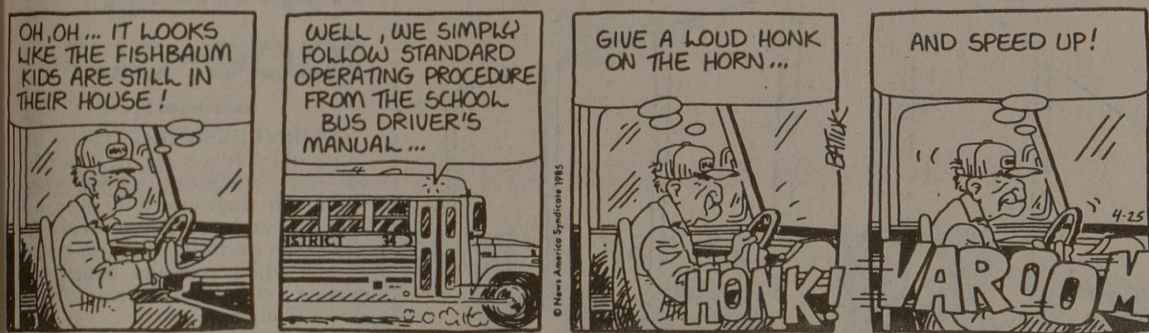


Funky Winkerbean



Committee queries Hall on judgeship

WASHINGTON — Democratic Rep. Sam B. Hall Jr., nominated by Republican Sen. Phil Gramm for a federal judgeship, told the Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday he will not "blindly follow" judicial rulings he believes wrong.

Committee chairman Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., said the committee will probably vote on Hall's nomination today. Hall, a Marshall lawyer, is expected to easily win confirmation to fill the seat of retiring U.S. District Judge Joe Fisher of Beaumont.

Valley residents to protest sea-burning of toxic waste

BROWNSVILLE — With the help of state officials — including Gov. Mark White — environmentalists will square off against the EPA today to protest proposed ocean incineration of toxic wastes in the Gulf of Mexico.

Environmentalists say they expect thousands of people to attend a public hearing scheduled for today. More than 6,000 people attended similar hearings in November 1983.

The public response delayed at-sea burnings by Chemical Waste Management Inc. until further studies were conducted.

Sue Ann Fruge of the Gulf Coast Coalition for Public Health, which organized the opposition, said the proposed toxic waste burnings have unified Rio Grande Valley residents.

"We don't really need to have another blow to our economy," Fruge said. "We're willing to fight for it."

The coalition has run newspaper and television advertisements telling

about the public hearing.

A television commercial shows a family of four on the beach as the theme of the movie "Jaws" begins.

"Just when you thought it was safe to go into the water — 'Ocean Incineration II,'" says the narrator.

The commercial then shows waste burnings on a ship, with smoke billowing from stacks and the narrator telling of the possible hazards and asking residents to attend the public hearing.

The 30-second commercial ends with the same family on the beach wearing gas masks.

"Ocean Incineration II, coming soon to a beach near you," the narrator concludes.

Today's public hearing will be preceded by a rally at Texas Southmost College, including addresses by Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox, state Reps. Don Lee and Rene Oliveira and state Sen. Hector Uribe.

The protesters then will march to the Jacob Brown Auditorium where

the all-day public hearing is scheduled.

The governor is expected to testify at the hearing at approximately 3:30 p.m., his office said Wednesday.

Officials from Chemical Waste Management Inc. have been in the Valley to try to reassure residents the incineration is safe.

The Brownsville hearing is the third in a series of public hearings being conducted across the country on proposed ocean incineration.

Environmentalists have complained the EPA is not making the public aware of hearings and is not making available the agency's background reports on ocean incineration.

Opponents also protest the proposal of granting 10-year permits to companies to operate ocean incinerators, contending that the technology has not been properly tested.

New Funds

(continued from page 1)

The declining oil and gas taxes are the main reason the future does not look good for the Texas economy, says Dr. James Griffin, an economist at Texas A&M who specializes in the international oil market.

"There's nothing but bad news ahead," Griffin said. "Looking at the world market over the next five years, we're looking at constant or declining oil prices."

Combining constant or declining prices with declining production is not likely to help the Texas economy, Griffin said.

A Texas Railroad Commission study indicates oil production and reserves in Texas are rapidly declining. The study shows that in 1984, 881 million barrels of oil were produced. Total reserve for 1984 was estimated at 7.6 billion barrels. But in the year 2003, oil production is expected to drop to 525 million barrels with reserves totaling only 4.9 billion barrels.

If oil production and reserves decrease as the study predicts, Texas will face a 35 percent decrease in oil reserves and a 40 percent decrease in production over the next 19 years.

A 40 percent decrease in production — assuming the price of oil remained at \$27 a barrel — would deprive Texas of over \$16 billion in oil

taxes over the next 19 years.

"Based on constant prices, oil revenues are trending downward at 3.1 percent a year," Griffin said. "Production in Texas has been trending downward for the last ten years and we're going to see a continuation of that trend."

That downward trend in oil production and prices is the cause of Texas' financial troubles, Griffin said.

"Even if oil prices are constant, your tax base is declining at 3.1 percent a year," Griffin said. "That's taking a big bite out of state revenues."

"The state has got to cut expenditures or find new ways to generate revenues."

The state shouldn't count on oil and gas taxes as a significant source of revenue in the future because chances are slim that the oil industry will turn around soon, Griffin said. But, he said, certain possibilities do exist.

"The only thing that could change the current situation is the price of oil going up," Griffin said. "And the price of oil can be driven up by a number of factors."

A major energy crisis would be good for Texas, but it would be bad for the nation as a whole, he said. It is unlikely that the world soon will ex-

perience an energy crisis or a war that wipes out the Middle East, causing an oil shortage and increasing its price, Griffin said.

"Barring those reactions, I think Texas is going to have to look at other means of generating revenues," Griffin said.

One proposed means of generating revenues that would affect the oil industry is raising the tax rate on every barrel of oil produced, Griffin said.

According to a U.S. Department of Energy study, 12 of the 26 states that tax crude oil production have higher tax rates than Texas. Of the three biggest oil producing states, Alaska's 15 percent tax rate is the highest, followed by Louisiana with 12.5 percent, and Texas with 4.6 percent.

Dr. Thomas Plaut, manager of economic forecasting at the University of Texas Bureau of Business Research, also said Texas has to look ahead and investigate other ways of generating revenue.

"The basic problem with the Texas budget is that it has major structural problems," he said. "It's way too dependent on oil and gas revenues. Twenty-four percent of the budget relies on oil and gas revenues. That 24 percent is five times the national average."

"In the future the state will have to increase taxes and find other sources of revenue. We can get through this session (69th Legislature) with the measures already taken, but that won't be the case in the next session."

Plaut said cuts in expenditures and the proposed increase in college tuition are part of the reason Texas lawmakers didn't have to implement new taxes in the 69th Legislature. But the next session, as well as other sessions, will be a little different, he said.

"We are running out of short-term things to do," Plaut said. "We adopted an accelerated sales tax during the special session, but we can do that only once."

Texas is facing some serious fiscal problems in the approaching years. With the declining price of oil and declining production, the oil and gas industry does not look like the significant source of funds it once was, Plaut said.

The solution to Texas financial problems is something Texans might not like, but it's something they're going to have to accept, he said.

"Taxes will have to be increased to make up for the declining production and prices," Plaut said.

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Students: Your Suggestions Please!

A Special Task Force on the Quality of Student Life was appointed this spring and it will continue to meet next school year (1985-86).

One method to be used next fall is an indepth Student Questionnaire, to assist in its preparation your assistance is needed to identify concerns, problems, and issues in four major categories of student life:

- (1) Academic
- (2) Traditions
- (3) Services for Students
- (4) Student Organizations, Activities and Programs

All Suggestions are solicited. Please send or bring your suggestions to:

Special Task Force on the Quality of Student Life
Office of the Vice President for Student Services
110 YMCA Building
Texas A&M University
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