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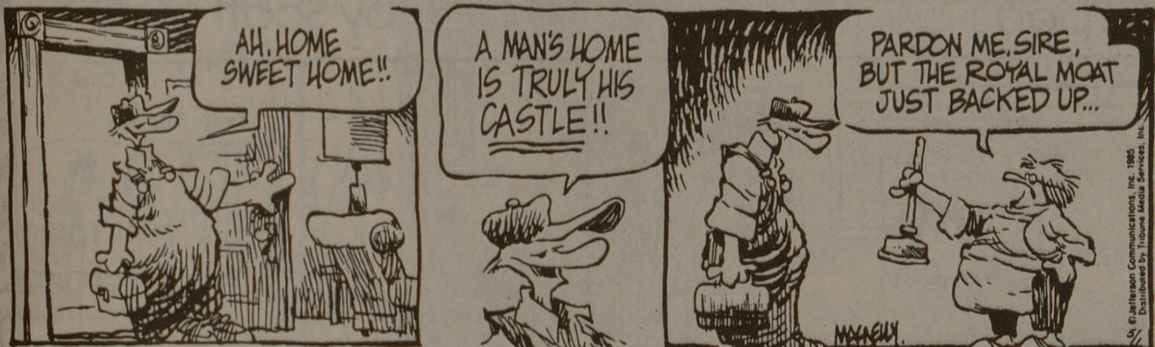
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SHOE



White backing parent group on reform bill

Associated Press
AUSTIN — Gov. Mark White assured a parent group Tuesday that he will block any legislative effort to stray from the public school reform bill approved last year and under attack this year.

The governor spoke to Parents for House Bill 72, a group that backs the education changes included in that bill.

"We oppose any bills intended to amend House Bill 72," the group said in a letter to White, Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, Speaker Gib Lewis and lawmakers.

White told the group to "never let up" in working for better schools.

The Senate has approved a bill aimed at cleaning up, but not weakening, the reform measure approved last summer. The cleanup bill is sponsored by Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, who is also author of the reform bill.

The House is working on a series of cleanup bills. Lewis has said he prefers to deal with each problem in a separate bill, but he said Tuesday that the House might have to accept the Parker omnibus bill.

"I don't think it's that harmful," he said. "I don't think it deviates away from the true intent or damages HB72 to any great degree."

Lewis added that Parker has given him "pretty good assurances" that Parker would fight weakening amendments added by the House.

Efforts have been made to change several major portions of HB72, including the no-pass, no-play provision and the required competency tests for teachers. So far, neither effort has succeeded, although the Senate bill asks the State Board of Education to review the no-pass, no-play provision that bars failing students from extracurricular activities.

White said statistics show that the failure rate in schools has not increased, even though the passing grade is now higher.

"We are seeing a strengthening of programs," White said. "We are seeing people say this is for real, this is serious, it's going to require harder work and I think you will find they'll do better."

Funky Winkerbean



Senate passes shrimping bill

Senate passes shrimping bill

Filibuster all talked out

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Bay shrimpers, who had slept on the floor and in chairs at the Capitol, applauded a weary senator Tuesday after he broke off a 20-hour filibuster against a bill that would regulate Texas' shrimp and oyster fishing industry.

Sen. Carlos Truan's 19-hour, 52-minute filibuster, which began at 9:52 a.m. Monday and ended at 5:44 a.m., was marred by a scuffle between two other senators.

After Truan sat down, the Senate approved a bill that would give the state Parks and Wildlife Department regulatory authority over Texas' multi-billion dollar shrimp and oyster fishing industry.

Truan pressed home his concern that the bill would give the larger-boat shrimpers in the Gulf of Mexico an advantage over bay shrimpers.

Opponents also said the Parks and Wildlife Department was neutral and did not want to regulate the shrimp and oyster industry.

"People will wake up when the price of shrimp goes up," said Truan, a 49-year-old lawmaker who attempted the filibuster, although he suffered a heart attack in 1979.

"Make no mistake about it," Truan said, "this bill is special-interest legislation pushed by gulf shrimpers to eliminate competition in the bays."

But the bill's sponsor, Sen. Tati Santiesteban, D-El Paso, said: "I don't know any part of this bill that will put anybody out of work."

Truan said the Santiesteban bill was "conceived in the dark corner of a lobbyist's office," and he added, "It's the big guy wanting to kick the little guy out of business."

Santiesteban said, "I'm a lot of things, but I'm not dishonest."

An angry scene just before midnight momentarily eclipsed Truan as Sens. Carl Parker and Hugh Parmer exchanged barbs and came close to fist fighting.

Parker, D-Port Arthur, was talking against Santiesteban's bill when

Parmer asked if any amendments were pending.

"Parmer, you're going to keep it up and you're never going to be elected to a job two terms," Parker said.

Parmer, former Fort Worth mayor, responded: "Senator, I may not be elected but I ain't been indicted yet."

Parker has been indicted in Jefferson County on felony charges of engaging in criminal activity and wholesale promotion of obscene material.

Parmer pursued what amendment was pending, and Parker said: "Sen. Parmer, I think what you and I ought to do is go out back and talk about your smart remarks."

The two senators walked into a hallway near the members' lounge. Reporters in the hallway saw Santiesteban standing between the two senators as if to keep them separated. Help soon arrived, and the two senators were led back out to the floor where Parmer apologized.

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