

State and Local

Law on in-home work sets off conflict Possibility of repeal pits farmers against unions

By Christi Daugherty
Staff Writer

The possibility that the government might drop a 40-year-old federal regulation is resulting in a conflict between farmers and organized labor.

The controversial regulation forbids the employment of people in their homes for the purpose of making specified handcrafted items.

The prohibited items are women's apparel, gloves, mittens, buckles, buttons, embroidery, handkerchiefs and jewelry.

Keith Garrison, director of farm labor programs for the Texas Farm Bureau in Waco, said that the law originated when the Fair Labor Standards Act was written in the 1930s.

At that time the prohibition against in-home work was created because the new standards could not be enforced in people's homes.

Garrison said the Farm Bureau, which is organizing a write-in campaign to the labor department, opposes the regulation because it feels it has outlived its usefulness, and in light of the current recession in the farm industry, does more harm than good.

The reasons for its existence are obsolete, and people need to be able to work at home. "Also, the Farm Bureau is pro-free enterprise, and we think there's no basis for this regulation," he said.

"The majority of the letters came from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and several other unions," Blackburn said. "But many letters came from residents of rural areas."

Blackburn said the union letters were against any move to change the regulation, while the letters from farmers generally were in favor of ending the ban.

The unions fear the intrusion of homemade articles on the market and the possibility that their businesses might be harmed, he said.

Dr. Marvin Martin, assistant professor in the Texas A&M Department of Agricultural Economics, said he has noticed that most farmers pay little attention to the regulation anyway.

"Basically this ban is ignored except when the federal government decides to go out and prosecute someone," Martin said. "And that almost never happens."

"I mean, how would you go out and find these housewives knitting doilies in their living rooms?"

The main problems rest with people who contract out to companies, he said. They're assigned work to do at home, and when they finish they send it in to the factory.

In this way, however, they manage to side-step safety and fair labor standards, and even child-employment laws.

Blackburn said that while public opinion certainly will have some impact on the ultimate decision-making, at the moment it's adding heat but not much light to the situation.

"There are good reasons for both sides," Blackburn said. "There are firms that exploit workers, and then there are farmers who need extra income."

He said that certain employers, mainly in the garment industry, make their employees take work home, often against the employees' wills.

Since most of the workers are illegal aliens, the so-called "sweatshops" rarely are reported.

The sweatshops exist in every state, including Texas, he said, and one recently was shut down in El Paso.

The government does not want to legalize this activity, he said.

Garrison said that the Farm Bureau is finding itself in an unusual position, since usually it sides with labor.

"If you can only make garments in a factory then you can unionize easily," he said. "It's almost impossible to organize people in their own homes."

Blackburn said that no matter what the labor department decides to do, the case probably won't be settled anytime soon.

"Whatever we decide we're sure to be challenged in court, so we've got to make sure we do this right and satisfy all the legal requirements," he said.

Results of Saturday's recount confirmed incumbent Milton Turner's win in the Precinct 4 Brazos County Commissioner's race, with a two-vote gain for Turner over the original Nov. 4 tally, Brazos County Clerk Frank Boriskie said Monday.

The recount gave Turner 2,162 votes, a 47-vote win over Rodger Lewis' 2,115-vote total.

The votes were canvassed Monday morning by the Commissioner's Court at its regular meeting, making Turner's election official for the

next four years, Boriskie said.

Lewis requested the recount because of the closeness of the first count, a one-percent difference, and several mechanical problems encountered in other precincts during the initial count.

Lewis was required to deposit \$290 with his petition for the recount. The deposit will be forfeited since the recount did not change the winner of the race.

Neither man could be reached for comment Monday.

William Blackburn, director of policy at the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., said that a recent move by U.S. Labor Secretary William Brock to lift the ban on certain items resulted in a flood of letters revealing the different aspects of the issue.

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UT officials, students discuss action on drinking death

AUSTIN (AP) — University of Texas officials Monday met with about a half dozen students to discuss possible disciplinary action in connection with the drinking death of a fraternity pledge.

The students were summoned by letter to meet with the dean of students after an extensive university investigation into the death of Mark Seeberger, 18, of Dallas.

Seeberger was found dead in his off-campus dormitory room Sept. 18.

An autopsy showed that he died of alcohol poisoning.

Authorities have said Seeberger died following a fraternity "ride," in which he and two other Phi Kappa Psi pledges allegedly were handcuffed and forced to drink.

University officials have not released the identity of the students facing disciplinary measures.

Action against them could range from reprimands to expulsion, officials have said.

UT spokeswoman Joyce Pole said federal privacy laws prevented the school from disclosing any information about Monday's disciplinary proceedings.

The Travis County grand jury also has been investigating.

Turner's win confirmed in Precinct 4 recount

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Gulf States Utilities accelerating payment of \$55.1 million in bonds

BEAUMONT (AP) — Gulf States Utilities Co.'s cash crunch worsened Monday when officials announced the firm must accelerate \$55.1 million in bond payments that would not normally be due for another 18 years.

GSU supplies the electricity for College Station and recently received a rate increase of 7 percent for its wholesale electric customers.

GSU spokesman Kim McMurray said GSU must make a bond payment of at least \$55.1 million in late 1987 on pollution-control

bonds that were backed by insurance agreements with American Mutual Bond Assurance Corp.

"Not only are we looking at being out of cash in early March, we're looking at having a \$423 million shortfall next year," McMurray said.

"The main thing we need right now is cash," he added. "Our projections show we'll owe \$65 million in interest payments and other obligations by March. Unless we get more cash coming in we're not going to

be able to make the cash obligations."

The insurance agreements, which enabled GSU to obtain a lower interest rate on the bonds, required certain financial criteria that the company now can't meet, officials said.

Under those agreements, GSU now has two choices — make a cash reserve deposit of \$55.1 million or have a \$110 million promissory note drawn against the company's assets with payment due in about a year, McMurray said.

Since GSU can't at the moment pay \$55.1 million, a promissory note will be drawn on Dec. 4 and will be due for payment on Nov. 29, 1987, McMurray said.

Last Tuesday, Gulf States asked the Public Utility Commission for a \$144.1 million rate hike. The two-part request includes an emergency \$82 million increase that would take effect late this year and an additional \$62.1 million increase for next year.

The \$82 million emergency request is an

effort to pump quick cash into the company.

The \$62.1 million extra increase would allow the company to cover costs of the River Bend Nuclear Plant in Louisiana, which went into commercial operation June 16 and supplies electricity for GSU customers in Texas and Louisiana.

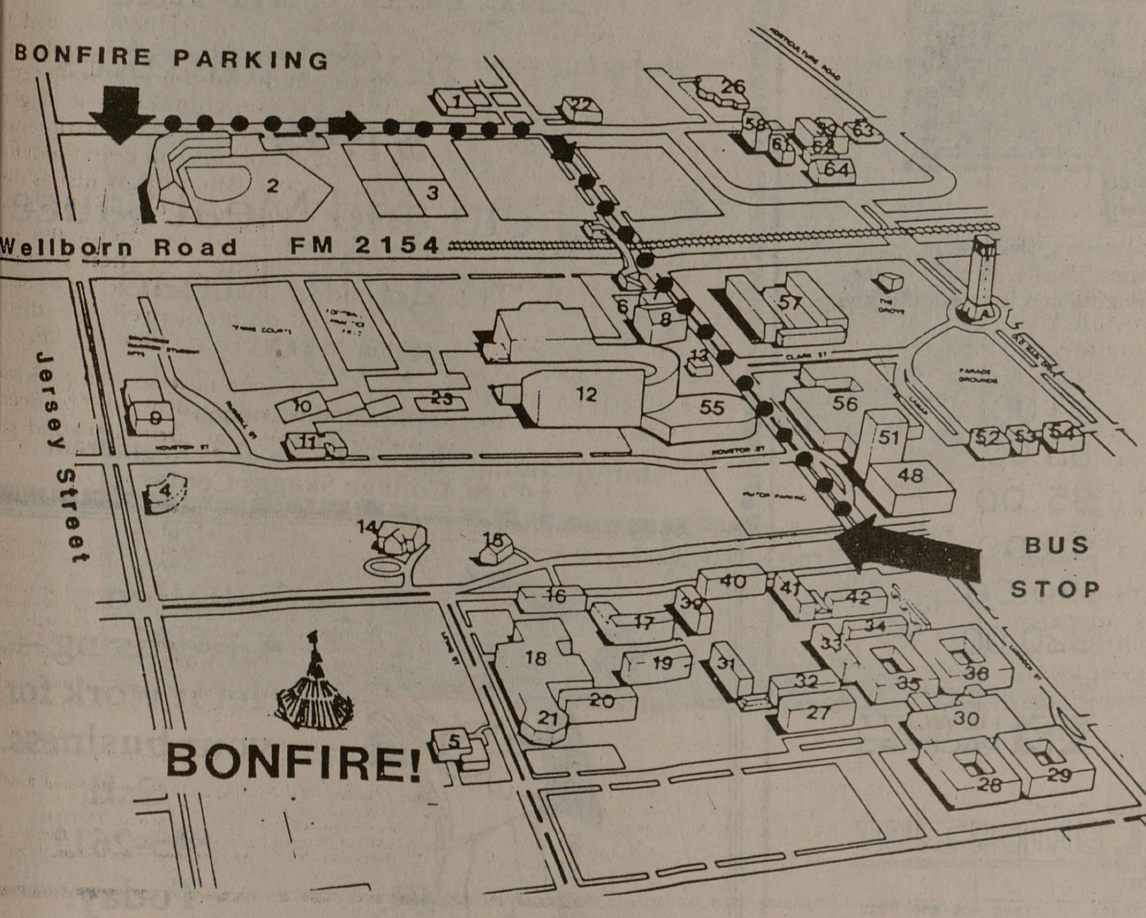
The Louisiana Public Service Commission has been asked to approve a \$202 million GSU rate hike, including \$100 million in emergency relief.

1986 BONFIRE PARKING AND BUS SERVICE HASSLE FREE PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM BONFIRE 6:30 TO 9:30 NOVEMBER 25

The University Police, the University Shuttle Bus Service and the 1986 Aggie Bonfire will be offering an opportunity for bus service to transport you to and from bonfire from 6:30 - 9:30 pm on Tuesday, November 25, 1986.

The 1986 Bonfire will be lit at 8:00 pm. In the past, traffic jams and illegal parking on and around the campus have created hazardous safety problems on our campus during the burning of Bonfire. To alleviate these problems, this bus service is being offered free of charge to all students and visitors to our campus for bonfire.

- PARK IN PA 63 - OLSEN FIELD (SEE MAP)
- BUSES WILL BEGIN RUNNING AT 6:30 PM, RUN ON 10 MINUTE INTERVALS UNTIL 9:30 PM.
- BUSES WILL PICK UP AT THE OLSEN FIELD BUS STOP AND DROP AT THE JOE ROUNTT-THROCKMORTON BUS STOP.
- ALL RUNS INTO THE CAMPUS AND BACK OUT TO THE PARKING LOT ARE FREE.



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