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Texas unions fight to remain stable in slow oil industry

(AP) — Organized labor groups are fighting to save their roots in Southeast Texas, where the depressed energy industry has taken its toll on union membership and strength.

Unemployment has risen and labor's traditional strongholds in the areas of steel, construction and petrochemical manufacturing are slowly drying up.

"These are not happy times for working people and they are not happy times for the labor movement either," said Don Horn, executive secretary of the Harris County Council of the AFL-CIO, which represents about 120 local unions.

Employment at Cameron Iron Works has fallen from a peak of about 7,000 in 1982 to 1,800 in the Houston area, while nearby Baytown's USX steel plant is closed.

Construction jobs are almost nonexistent in Houston and automation continues to knock workers out of the petrochemical production ranks, the *Houston Chronicle* reported Sunday.

The AFL-CIO claims losses of about 100,000 since the late 1970s, with numbers dropping to 400,000. Local union membership has fallen from 86,000 to 85,000, the newspaper said.

Texas' depressed economy as well as larger forces that have weakened the labor movement on the national front have had an impact on local unions.

William J. Moore, a labor specialist, said many people are not as interested in being a union member these days.

"The traditional growth sectors of unions such as construction and manufacturing are where they have lost jobs in the past 25 years and the people in the high growth sectors of technology are not interested in joining unions," he said.

Attempts to unionize workers in the traditionally non-union industries such as office and high-technology industries have not met with much success.

"These workers don't want to team up with others," Moore, a professor of economics at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, said. "They don't want to invest their time in a job they aren't going to remain in. They would rather work harder and move up by individual effort."

"Blue collars have less upward mobility. They are locked into the same type of job. They have to try to improve the job and get more money out of it because that's the way they can succeed."

Moore said he does not believe there is much hope for a resurgence of unions unless there is some cataclysmic event like the Great Depression of the 1930s. But he added he believed organized labor's membership will stabilize and unions will continue to exist.

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Pickens tests magic of finding gold in offer for mining company

DALLAS (AP) — T. Boone Pickens has made a fortune for himself and investors through takeover plays for major energy companies and now he's testing his magic in gold.

Last week, a Pickens investor partnership offered to buy Newmont Mining Corp., the largest gold producer in North America, for \$5.7 billion.

Analysts saw the \$95-a-share offer by Ivanhoe Partners as the answer to where Pickens would strike next.

Pickens, chairman of Mesa Limited Partnership in Amarillo, launched hostile takeover bids for major oil companies including Gulf Oil Co. and Phillips Petroleum Corp.

The Newmont takeover bid is attributed to various motivations by Pickens watchers.

Some suggest a need for a cash-flow injection to fund Mesa's \$2 annual distribution. Another motivation mentioned is a fascination for

commodities trading and an eye for undervalued assets.

The company making the Newmont offer, Ivanhoe, is a partnership 45 percent controlled by Mesa, 25 percent by Harbert Corp., a Birmingham construction conglomerate, 20 percent by NRM Energy Co. of Dallas (a limited partnership one-third owned by Mesa) and 10 percent by Galactic Resources of Vancouver, British Columbia.

Ivanhoe owns 9.95 percent of Newmont and is offering to pay \$95 per share for the rest of the company.

Some analysts say there is a possibility Ivanhoe would acquire Newmont and split up its assets, leaving the gold mining operations to Pickens and Mesa.

William Siedenberg, an investment analyst with Smith Barney, Harris Upham & Co. in New York, said, "This is a scenario that seems to make good sense."

Mexican Socialist Party votes to pick presidential hopeful

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Members and sympathizers of the newly formed Mexican Socialist Party voted in 3,000 polling booths nationwide Sunday for one of four hopefuls, who will be their candidate in next year's presidential election.

This is the first primary election on record in Mexico and the Socialists, considered the second biggest of seven opposition groups, expressed hope it will lay a challenge for the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, also known as PRI.

At midday, there was no immediate word on the primaries' turnout.

Castillo, 59, one of Mexico's best known leftists and founder of the Mexican Workers Party, is one of the leading primary candidates along with Eradio Zepeda, 50, a writer, actor, ex-congressman, anthropologist and professor.

The other two — Jose Hernandez Delgadillo, 60, a muralist, and Antonio Becerra Gaytan, a 52-year-old educator — are lesser known.

As in previous years, both the PRI and the conservative National Action Party, or PAN, are selecting their candidates in closed meetings of party leaders.

The PRI candidate, to be chosen by outgoing President Miguel de la Madrid, is expected to be announced later this month. Whoever the candidate, he is certain to be elected president July 6, and take office for a single six-year term Dec. 1, 1988.

The PRI has not lost an election for president or governor since it was founded in 1929.

The Socialists hope to eventually edge out the PAN to become the largest minority party in Mexico.

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