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Trade deficit eases, government reports

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's trade deficit eased to \$14.1 billion in September, the government reported Thursday in statistics that suggested the U.S. import-export picture was brightening even before the stock market crash.

The report, marking the lowest trade shortfall in four months, touched off a rally in the financial markets.

The Commerce Department said the merchandise trade deficit, the gap between imports and exports, decreased by a strong \$1.6 billion in

September from the \$15.7 billion level of August.

The Dow Jones industrial average surged 69 points by early afternoon while the dollar, which had sunk to new 40-year lows earlier in the week, rallied strongly in New York, rising more than 1 yen in value to 136.35 yen. It also was sharply higher against European currencies.

Although much of the trade improvement came from a decline in oil imports, imports of manufactured goods also fell while exports of U.S.-made products rose sharply.

Economists took this as a sign that

the long-awaited turnabout in trade accounts from a declining dollar may have finally begun, and that it started weeks before the Oct. 19 stock market collapse.

A lower-valued dollar makes imports more expensive and U.S. goods more competitive abroad.

"Two and a half years after the dollar peaked, we are finally seeing an effect on both imports and exports," Robert Wescott, chief economist for Alphametrics, a Philadelphia forecasting service, said.

Court rules against law telling jurors of parole

AUSTIN (AP) — A divided Texas Court of Criminal Appeals ruled Thursday that a 1985 state law setting out details for instructing jurors about the possible effect of parole on a sentence in a criminal case is unconstitutional.

The court, however, upheld the conviction of the defendant who raised the legal issue, saying error at the punishment phase did not prevent him from getting a fair and impartial trial.

The issue arose on an appeal by

Vernon Lee Rose, who was convicted of the October 1984 aggravated robbery of a Dallas textile executive at his plant.

The textile owner, according to court records, was robbed of \$160 at gunpoint and left tied up.

Rose was arrested eight days later in a high-speed chase after he tried to escape from police in a squad car. He was sentenced to life in prison.

Judge Sam Houston Clinton, writing for the 6-3 court majority, noted that the law dictates that the jury be informed at the punishment phase of a trial about prison "good time" and also how it can be taken away.

The law and jury instruction adds that a prison term may be reduced by parole and reveals to the jury the formula to be used in determining when the defendant would be eligible for parole.

The law specifically instructs the jury that it may consider "the existence of the parole law and good conduct time."

Clinton said this law violates the separation of powers doctrine in that it is an attempt by the Legislature to direct the judiciary to interfere with the state parole board, which he said is a member of the executive branch of government.

He also said the law, along with the instruction it mandates, is calculated to deny the accused the right to a fair and impartial trial on the issue of punishment.

"The risk that punishment will be based on extraneous considerations is intolerable in a society that constitutionally demands concepts of fundamental fairness be honored in its criminal justice system," Clinton wrote.

Clinton said he and Judge M.P. Duncan "are satisfied that in telling the jury it could consider the parole law and good conduct time the in-firm instruction fatally infected the entire punishment hearing."

However, Clinton said, concurring opinions by other judges say there was no harmful error at the punishment stage.

In a dissenting opinion, Judge Michael McCormick said the ruling would result in other guilty felons "walking the streets of Texas ..."

City council votes to include fluoride in CS water supply

By Doug Driskell
Staff Writer

An ordinance authorizing fluoride implementation into the water supply of College Station was passed unanimously by city council members Thursday night.

The majority of those debating were local dentists in favor of the ordinance.

Rick Williamson, a dentist in College Station, said the poverty-level families would benefit from fluoridation.

"I think fluoridation of the water would be giving the children of these families a chance to have healthy teeth," he said.

Bill Adams, a graduate student at Texas A&M University, said if the poor are malnourished, water containing fluoride would make them more susceptible to fluorosis.

Fluorosis is a condition resulting from excessive intake of fluorine, which causes discoloration and pitting of tooth enamel in children and bone and joint changes in adults.

Dr. Edward Harris, a professor in the biochemistry and biophysics department, was in favor of the ordinance and said not to view fluoride as an additive but as a chemical in the body.

"The National Academy of Sciences has recognized fluoride in 1980 as an essential dietary miner-

al," he said. "Fluoride is not recognized as an additive or a foreign compound introduced into our system. Rather, fluoride is a chemical intended for our bodily use and this is very important to realize."

Adams had an alternative to adding fluoride to the city's water supply.

"Anyone who wants fluoride in their water can go buy water with it in their local supermarket just like people can buy water with lower sodium," he said. "I think we are going to have a lot of problems with it if we add it to the water."

An electrical engineering graduate student from Belgium voiced his concern.

"In many European countries the fluoridation has been canceled just because they think it might be dangerous," Eric Soenen said. "It seems to make sense to me that just putting fluoride in the water is not the best way to provide it, because there is no way to control just how much people will swallow."

Councilman Jim Gardner had some doubt about adding fluoride, but said he would vote for it.

"I really feel an insecurity of the scientific aspect which I haven't digested enough of," he said.

Councilmen Lynn McIlhane and Pat Boughton both concluded fluoride would be a benefit for College Station.

Scientist calls infant nutrition in Africa cultural problem

By Lee Schexnaider
Staff Writer

The problem of infant nutrition in developing countries may not be a simple problem of poverty, food supply, population or education, it may be cultural, said a Texas A&M assistant professor of anthropology Thursday in Rudder Tower.

"The anthropologist appraisal is that it is a lot more complex," Dr. Katherine Dettwyler told members of the International Development Forum. "Having a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean you're well nourished."

Dettwyler was in the West African country of Mali from 1981 to 1983 doing field research for her doctorate. She said the problems in Mali are cultural rather than economic.

"What is happening to many children relates not to poverty or food supply or how many there are in a family or the mother's level of education or knowledge about nutrition," she said. "But it relates to cultural beliefs on how to feed children."

In Mali children have a degree of cultural autonomy that is un-

known in the Western countries.

"The base line is that they let the child join the family at meals and feed himself," she said.

Even if a child is only between seven and nine months old, the child is not fed, she said.

The food is eaten from a communal pot on the ground with the right hand rather than using utensils.

"Very rarely do mothers sit and put the food in children's mouths," she said.

She said that if a child does not like the food or is playing or sleeping when the food is served the child may not eat. She also said many children complain they don't like solid food. But poor appetite may have causes such as disease or nutritional deficiencies.

"I'm investigating the possibility of zinc deficiency," she said. Low zinc in the diet has been indicated as a cause of poor appetite and there is little zinc in the Malian diet, she said.

"Plus people say that only the child himself knows if he's hungry or if he's full," Dettwyler said. "So the children themselves are

allowed to decide when they want to eat and how much to eat."

She said this is foreign to they way Americans do things in that they control how much children eat.

"We bribe, we cajole and threaten . . . we talk about starving children in, pick your favorite developing country," she said. "You must clean your plate because there are children starving in China."

"As though it would make a difference to the children whether the child finished his food or not."

Dettwyler said that other factors contributed to the poor health of the children, including epidemics of measles and the constant problem of malaria.

She said that the people in Mali couldn't even depend on doctors for help with their children.

"There was one child in my sample that died of malaria," she said. "I said to his mother after she had told me the child had died, 'Why didn't you take him to the doctor or why didn't you come and get me?'"

Dettwyler said the mother

people available who want to serve the state of Texas."

"There probably will be an announcement early next week," Bashur said. "The governor is having meetings this week, and I think he's going to be making a final decision in a few days."

Texas judges at all levels are elected, although a governor can appoint replacements to fill vacancies that occur during his term.

Clements has more than three years left in the governor's office. Harrington said that means the governor likely will be naming a substantial number of judges to the various courts.

The TCLU is not advocating preferential treatment for minorities, Harrington said.

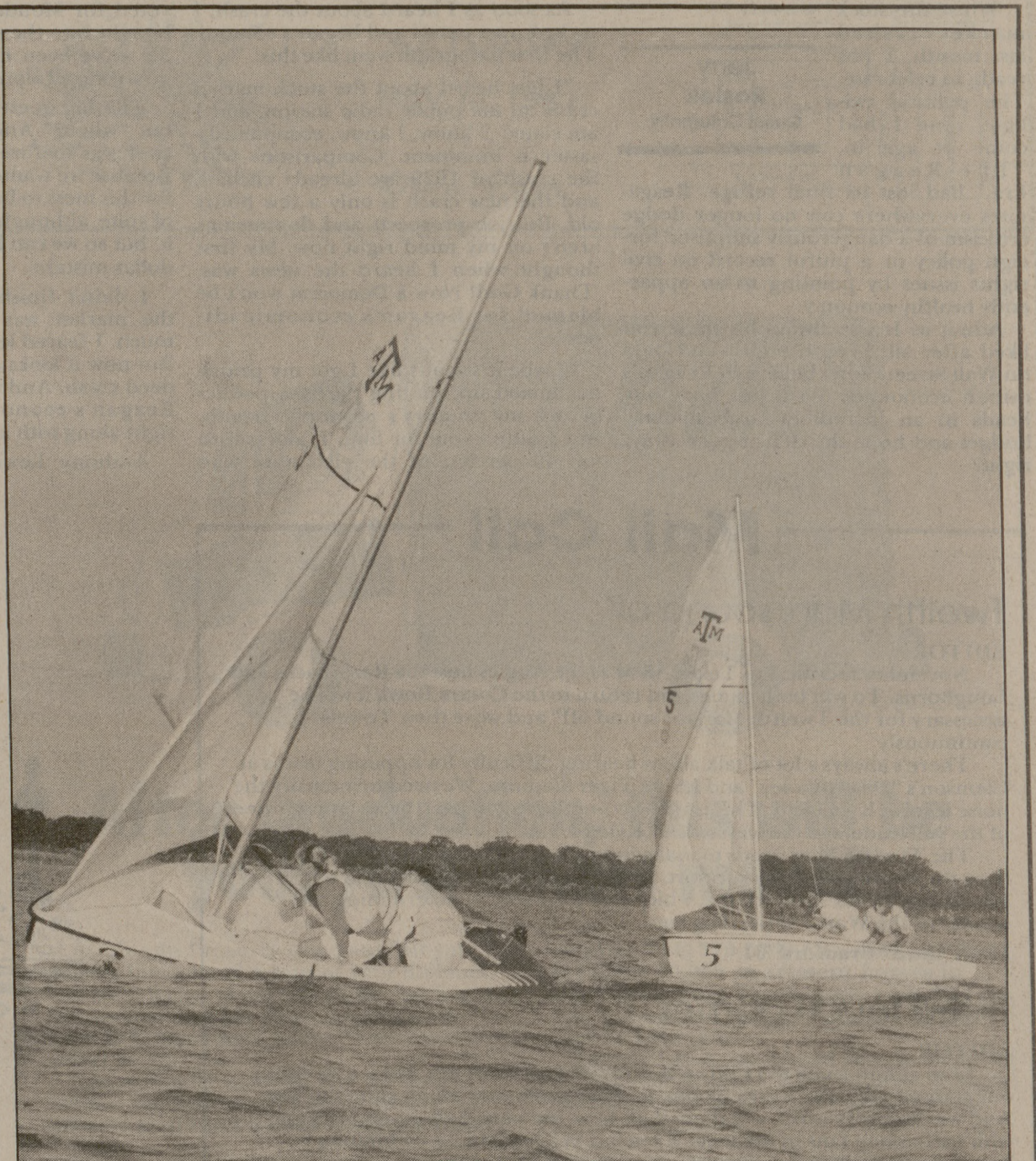


Photo by Vanessa Linslay

Prepare to board!

Emily Delgado and Donna Callenius from Texas A&M at Galveston are coming up quickly behind Caroline Snider and Sarah Lawson from Tulane in

one of the races for the Women's A Division at the annual Southeastern Intercollegiate Regatta on Oct. 31, which was sponsored by A&M.

TCLU supports nomination of woman, minority to court

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements may appoint a new Supreme Court chief justice within a few days, aides said Thursday, while the Texas Civil Liberties Union said Clements has an "historic opportunity" to name a minority or woman to the post.

Saying there is a "startling paucity" of minority and women judges on Texas appeals court benches, TCLU legal director Jim Harrington urged Clements to consider that in naming a replacement for resigning Chief Justice John Hill.

"It's something we're suggesting he ought to seriously look at — appointing a minority or woman as chief justice," Harrington said.

Harrington also wrote Clements a letter detailing the lack of minority

representation on the state's appellate courts and asking Clements to begin changing the courts' makeup.

"We urge your support in the effort to broaden the representation of Texas society on its courts, and to eliminate the vestiges of unconscionable discrimination," Harrington's letter said.

In an interview, Harrington said Clements' appointments so far have favored "middle-aged and older Anglo businessmen."

Reggie Bashur, the governor's press secretary, Thursday said Clements has a good record on appointments.

"Gov. Clements bases his judicial appointments on merit," Bashur said. "The process is totally color-blind and is based solely on the best



Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Dr. Katherine Dettwyler speaks about infant nutrition.

talked about another woman next door, who was also in the study.

"She had taken her child to the doctor, a French doctor, for malaria and he gave the child a shot of medication in the back of the leg, right in the sciatic nerve and crippled her," Dettwyler said.

The mother said that after that incident she would not take her child to the doctor for malaria. She said the child had the disease before and had recovered and she didn't think it would kill the child.

Dettwyler said education may be the key to solving such problems but the education must be culturally appropriate.

She suggested telling them to do things that do not violate or necessitate a change in their customs or beliefs. But Dettwyler said many times foreign organizations don't take into account the culture.

"If you tell them to produce special food for the children, they won't do it," she said. "They don't have the time to go gather firewood or cook extra meals."

"Their day is already full of hard labor."