

## State board approves cuts in school aid

AUSTIN (AP) — State aid to schools will be cut by an average of about \$9 per student this school year because of a legislative budget reduction.

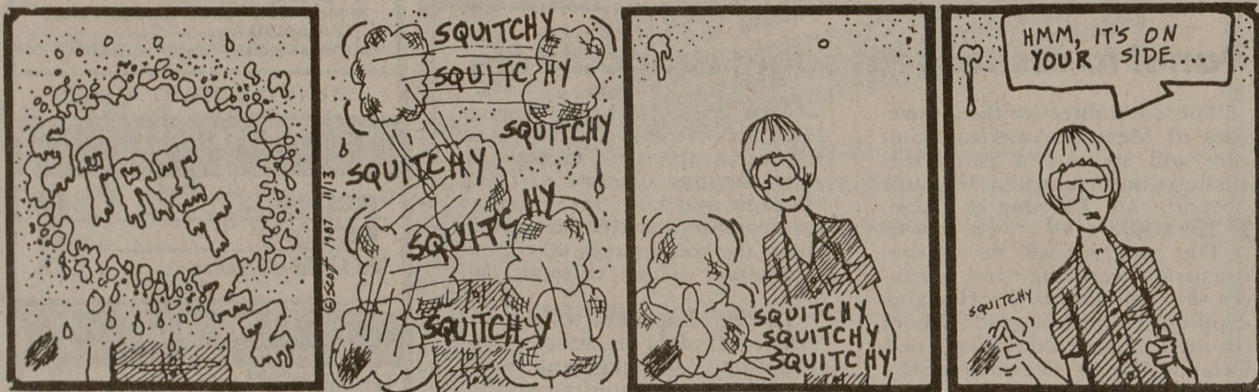
The State Board of Education on Saturday gave initial approval to a plan to cut school funding by an estimated \$26 million, the amount lost when the Legislature cut state agency funding across the board before approving the budget for the two-year fiscal cycle.

The board, which will consider the formula again after enrollment figures are updated in January, approved a plan that takes the local property tax rate of school districts into account when cutting state funding.

An alternative proration plan that would take the largest amount of state money away from districts with the lowest tax rates was turned down by the board, over the objection of some members.

The formulas voted on by the board were among four alternatives, ranging from a minimal to a substantial reliance on local tax effort.

## Warped



by Scott McCullar

## Waldo



by Kevin Thomas

# A&M gets research laboratory to examine space technology

Group will study artificial life support in waste recycling

By Janet Goode  
Staff Writer

Long, leisurely moon trips, space colonies and life on Mars. These are things dreamed of by astronauts, space engineers and children alike.

Now this dream can come true with the help of the newly dedicated Texas Engineering Experiment Station Regenerative Concepts Laboratory — a space research laboratory that will be used to study an artificial life-support environment in recycling waste materials.

The lab was presented to Texas A&M Friday at a dedication ceremony as a gift from the General Electric Co. Peter Kujawski, a general manager in the astro-space division of GE, said the system was given to A&M because of its research efforts.

"We looked around and we saw what was going on here at A&M, and in recognition of the efforts, we were pleased to donate the RITE engineering model and associated equipment to the regenerative concepts laboratory," Kujawski said.

Frank Borman, a former astronaut, attended the dedication. Borman was the command pilot on Gemini 7, which had the first rendezvous in space, and Apollo 8, which was the first spaceship to orbit the moon.

Kujawski, speaking at the ceremony, said space missions have been held back because of the inability to reuse essential resources — such as air, waste, water and food.

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general manager at GE

man to Mars," Kujawski said. "And for those missions to be a success, it's important to be able to recycle our resources."

The laboratory is being used by an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including biologists, chemists, plant scientists and engineers of agriculture, mechanics, chemistry, industry and biosystems — all of whom are interested in the different aspects of life support.

In introducing the various team members and the research they represent, Oran Nicks, director of the Space Research Center at A&M, explained how each group's research was tied into the life-support systems laboratory.

The soil and crop sciences are interested in lunar soils, he said, and in how to make things grow on the moon in what would be one of the first closed systems there.

Nicks said researchers in the area of knowledge engineering are interested in artificial intelligence.

Biologists, he said, are interested in ways of making algae into food products and ways to reprocess the atmosphere. They are working on turning carbon dioxide into oxygen, he said.

Nicks said chemists are working on ways to convert waste products into something useful.

The mechanical engineers are mainly interested in the aspects of life support, which is the basis for the laboratory, he said.

Mike Rabins, head of the A&M mechanical engineering department and host of the ceremony, said the RECON team is made up of 20 individuals from eight departments and four colleges at A&M. The team has been working together since 1985.

"We're delighted to bring all of these different disciplines together in working on such an exciting project," Rabins said as he unveiled two plaques recognizing the dedication of the TEES lab.

"Although the lab has just now been dedicated, it is already putting out data," Rabins said.

Hasan Chowdhury, a graduate student in mechanical engineering, was at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to explain about the laboratory and its experiments.

"The two main problems in space are with the water supply and the waste products," Chowdhury said. "The water, food, air — are all limited — and that limits the time that can be spent in space. And what can be done with the waste products in space? They can't just throw them away."

Chowdhury said this system will help solve these problems through

substance recycling and water purification.

The water is purified and then stored for reuse, he said. Experiments have shown that the water being recycled is perfectly pure, he said — purer than the typical drinking water.

"The ultimate goal of all of this is to someday have a station in Mars or on other planets," he said. "With this system, they (the astronauts) could stay as long as they want in space without having to communicate back and forth and without having to get more water and food."

"This type of experiment was never open to students before. There are a lot of things that can be learned from this."

This basic system, donated by GE, called the RITE system, is only a start, he said.

"There are a lot of parts left to be added," he said. "We are putting units together one by one. We are in a learning process right now."

The RECON team's research efforts have been funded from NASA since 1986.

Herbert H. Richardson, dean of engineering and director of TEES, said more funding will come if a new proposal is awarded to A&M.

The lab is in room 314 of the Engineering/Physics Building and is operated under Mike Rabins.

Richardson said this lab is part of the growing space research at A&M and may be furthered with the recently passed space-grant university program.

If A&M were to become a space-grant university, he said, it would definitely mean more money for research such as this.

## San Antonio youth gang blamed in car thefts

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Members of a violent, wide-ranging youth gang called "the Klan" are involved in more than a quarter of San Antonio's burgeoning auto thefts, police said.

Adult criminals are paying the young thieves \$200 for each car or truck delivered, police Capt. Jimmy Kopeck said.

Auto theft has increased 73.5 percent to an estimated \$44 million annual business in San Antonio, with 3,600 more vehicles already stolen this year than were taken in all of 1986, he said. Dur-

ing the first nine months of the year, 10,152 vehicles were reported stolen.

The Klan's members, who attend at least four high schools, also have been linked to assaults of younger teen-agers, police said.

Last week, the Klan was named for at least the 12th time in the past six months on a police report when three older youths assaulted a 13-year-old boy and a friend as they were walking home from a neighborhood convenience store.

"They use bats, knives and some of them carry firearms," Ernest Urbanowicz, security chief at a

high school attended by gang members, said.

In the past three weeks, four students at his school have been arrested for possession of stolen cars, Urbanowicz said.

"Kids steal cars because they know nothing will happen to them," Kopeck said, noting that juvenile offenders are treated more leniently than adults by the law.

"One 16-year-old kid came in here the other day and told me, 'Hey, I'm going to steal as many cars as I want to and have a good time while I can before I turn 17.'"

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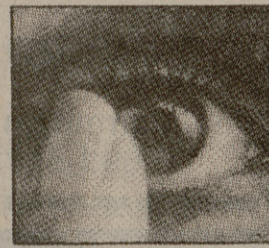
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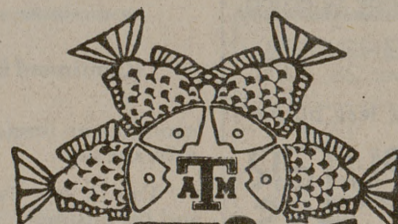
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