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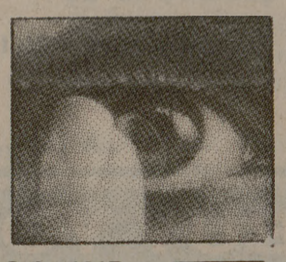

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INS officials take show on road to inform illegal aliens of rights

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Immigration officials are taking their amnesty show on the road to events that often attract Hispanic crowds in an attempt to convince more illegal aliens to apply for legalization.

The program, begun in Texas, will soon spread nationally, with the INS focusing on community-based events such as block parties, mariachi concerts and Spanish radio broadcasts.

The immigration rallies are prompted by the low numbers of eligible aliens taking advantage of obtaining legalization under the 1986 Immigration Reform Act.

The current turnout indicates millions of aliens, many from Mexico, are in danger of losing their opportunity to file for citizenship by the May 4 deadline.

INS officials said the new public awareness effort is the second phase of a heavily criticized $10.7 million information campaign to tell eligible aliens to apply at INS legalization centers.

"People are out driving around and they hear it on the radio and they decide to stop by and check it out. It's proven to allay a lot of their fears that legalization is some kind of trick."
Leo Soto, head of the San Antonio INS legalization services

People may apply for legal status if they entered the United States illegally before 1982 and lived in the country continually since.

Across the nation, applications for legalization lag far behind INS projections. Initially, INS officials predicted nearly 4 million would apply by May 1988. They've revised their estimates to 2 million. At the end of 1987, a little over 1 million people had applied for legal status.

In Texas, where the INS expected 500,000 to 750,000 applications, only 158,301 applications were received by Dec. 31.

The San Antonio INS district began its amnesty road campaign in October at San Angelo, later extending it to Austin and San Antonio.

The INS used Mariachis, free food and soft drinks and a van equipped as a legalization center.

Leo Soto, head of the San Antonio INS legalization services, said the turnout at the first rally in San Angelo was so great, there weren't enough clerks to handle applications. They had to return a second day.

"We felt it was important to put a spark into the program," Soto said. "We had to do something."

The San Antonio district includes legalization offices in Laredo, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Austin. There were less than 27,000 applications in the district by the end of 1987. The INS had expected 50,000, Soto said.

"Our applications had dropped off pretty heavily during the fall," he said. "But by going out to the communities, we showed that the people were out there."

In San Antonio during December, festivities at the local amnesty center produced more than 1,500 applications.

In Austin early this month, huge crowds turned out for a weekend of music and live broadcasts by a popular Spanish-language radio station in San Antonio.

The broadcasts, aired at the amnesty center, featured Hispanic entertainers and political and religious leaders who extolled the benefits of legalization. That event brought 1,500 applications, Soto said.

"People are out driving around and they hear it on the radio and they decide to stop by and check it out," he said. "It's proven to allay a lot of their fears that legalization is some kind of trick. We're recommending it to other districts as being a very effective way of getting the word out."

"We feel it's a very positive sign that INS is taking the grass-roots approach," Norma Cantu of the defense and educational fund said. But Cantu said there remains a lot of fear among illegal aliens about amnesty and legalization.

City of Houston makes plans to hire engineers for railway

HOUSTON (AP) — The city's Metropolitan Transit Authority already is planning to hire engineers to help develop a 20-mile light rail system after voters overwhelmingly approved a $2.6 billion transit plan.

Harris County voters Saturday approved the 13-year plan that calls for street improvements, upkeep and expansion of the city bus system and a network of freeway bus lanes.

Alan Kiepper, Metro's general manager, said he'll ask the MTA board on Jan. 28 to hire an engineering firm to help write an environmental impact statement on the rail system. Other engineers will be hired to draw preliminary designs.

Once the environmental impact study and preliminary design are done, probably by mid-1989, Metro will apply for federal funding, Kiepper said. Land acquisition and rail construction most likely will begin by the end of 1991, he said.

The approved plan includes $340 million for transitways and other facilities, $320 million for new buses, $560 million for road improvements and $1 billion for the rail system which is to connect, among other things, the downtown area with the Astrodome, the Texas Medical Center and the Galleria shopping area, where it would feed bus routes.

Metro critics, however, dismissed the significance of Saturday's election and are collecting petition signatures to force a May 7 election that would cut Metro's sales tax in half from 1 percent to 0.5 percent.

The signatures collected so far fall short of the estimated 45,000 needed by Feb. 1 to force the May election.

"Certainly if we can cut that tax, they can't build the rail system," Metro critic Barry Klein said. "That's one way to stop it."

Metro board chairman John J. King said Metro would probably have cut its penny sales tax voluntarily if voters had rejected the plan.

Under the approved proposal, construction of the rail system would be contingent upon 70 percent federal and private sector money, although no private sources publicly have signed on.

Over the past five years, the city has opened 20.1 miles of transitways, or special highway lanes reserved for buses, vanpools, and in some cases, carpools. Under the transit plan, an additional 57 miles of transitways would be constructed.

In 1983, voters decisively rejected a $2.35 billion bond measure to pay for a city rail system.

Metro assembled a team of more than 300 engineers before the vote in 1983, and the overconfident MTA board bought 130 railcars for $139 million in an emergency meeting four months in advance of the vote.

Voters smashed the plan, forcing Metro to fire nearly all the engineers and pay a $500,000 penalty to cancel the railcar contract.

Lost Holly songs being recorded by country band

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) – Two long-lost songs written by rock and roll pioneer Buddy Holly will be recorded this week by the pop-country band Razorback, a spokesman for the group says.

The song "Am I Ever Gonna Find It" and another untitled verse were written just before Holly died in a plane crash in 1959, Razorback spokesman Terry O'Neill said.

Holly, who was from Lubbock, Texas, is known for hits such as "Peggy Sue" and "That'll Be the Day." Killed with him in the crash were Richie Valens and the Big Bopper.

Producer Scott Turner of Nashville collaborated with Holly in writing the songs. The tunes were hidden in the inside cover of Turner's guitar case which he was about to throw out when he found them in 1980, O'Neill said.

O'Neill said Turner and Holly's widow, Maria, have decided to let the six-member band record the songs. Turner will produce the recording session here today and tomorrow at the Sound Emporium studio with Maria Holly present.

"She was determined that whatever group recorded these songs, that they do them with their own interpretation," O'Neill said.

The songs have never been recorded before. The first of the two should be released next month.

Razorback, based in Fort Smith, Ark., has been together for three years. Their songs "This Ole House" and "As Long As I've Been Loving You" were on the country music charts a year ago.

The untitled Holly song will be given a name this week, O'Neill said.

Currency plant construction faces shortfall of funds before completion

FORT WORTH (AP) — Construction of a federal currency plant that will print 25 percent of the nation's money is running into a shortfall of pledged cash needed to build the site.

The first phase of construction of the Western Currency Production Facility is complete except for construction of a perimeter road, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported Sunday.

The facility's construction is a project of the county, city, state, private industry and U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

The county has fulfilled its obligation of preparing the site, but county Commissioner J.D. Johnson said, "We had to beg, borrow and scrounge equipment from just about everybody in the world."

It's now the city's turn to begin the second phase of the project, construction of a building shell for the printing facility.

Fort Worth outbid 82 other cities in 1986 with its $15.7 million commitment for the facility that promised prestige, 1,200 jobs and an estimated $100 million a year to the area.

But drastic changes in the economy — including the oil slump, depressed real-estate profits and the downturn in the stock market — have resulted in a shortfall in the projected $7.5 million in donations pledged by private industry, the *Star-Telegram* reported.

About $1.2 million must be collected from private sources before construction begins on the 288,000-square-foot shell building.

"We will get this done," Mayor Bob Bolen said. "It is absolutely too important to this community for us not to. We will never get this opportunity again."

Johnson said he received a lot of free and voluntary assistance to finish the county's obligation, especially at times when resources had just run out.

But some of the businesses that pledged to help the city construct the printing building have gone out of business.

"On the orginal amount ($7.5 million), we currently have a shortfall of $3 million," said Tom Higgins, a city economic development specialist. "But we're still hopeful we'll be able to award the contract next month and finish the building by October."

Although it's making fund raising difficult, the economic downturn may benefit the project slightly.

"The economy prevented us from getting some of the donations, but it also reduced the cost of the project since we're getting some of the services for less," senior assistant city manager David Ivory said.

"We also will save about $500,000 on the consturction bid," he said. "We received a very strong (low) bid from a local firm that is solid financially."

But the city could be facing litigation from laborers. Labor leaders say the city has violated the Davis-Bacon Act.

The Act guarantees workers will be paid prevailing wage as set by the secretary of labor for all construction contracts involving the federal government. The city is using its own wage standard for contract work on the shell building.

Navy commissions new guided missile cruiser USS San Jacinto close to namesake battlefield

HOUSTON (AP) — The Navy's newest guided missile cruiser, bearing the name of the battle which gained the Republic of Texas its independence, arrives Monday, beginning a week of ceremonies that culminates with official commissioning.

The $1 billion USS San Jacinto is the 10th ship of the Aegis class of cruisers, all named after historic American battles.

Unlike its sister ships, however, the San Jacinto is unique in that the commissioning will take place within sight of its namesake battlefield.

Vice President George Bush is scheduled to preside over ceremonies commissioning the ship into the nation's fleet Saturday.

The San Jacinto is named after the 18-minute battle in which the Texas Army, commanded by Sam Houston and outnumbered about 2-1, routed the Mexican Army on April 21, 1836, under Gen. Santa Anna.

The site, at the junction of the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou about 15 miles east of downtown Houston, is marked by a monument which is a near-duplicate of the Washington Monument.

"It (the guided missile cruiser) has the most elite of radar systems. This is the 'star wars' approach to protecting aircraft carriers."
— Scott Pitzer, Navy spokesman

The battlefield, now a Texas state park, also is home to the Battleship Texas, itself a veteran of action in World Wars I and II and now undergoing renovation.

A committee has been working for six months, trying to come up with $280,000 to cover expenses of the week-long ceremonies leading up to the commissioning of the ship.

"It's been like pulling teeth raising the money," said Hugh W. Hardy, a retired major general in the Marine Corps Reserve and chairman of the panel.

Plans called for a 21-gun salute to be exchanged Monday between the San Jacinto and shore batteries at precisely the moment when the cruiser crosses the fantail of the battleship, Navy spokesman Scott Pitzer said.

The salute will be answered by a Texas National Guard contingent using a 75mm howitzer flown in from Austin.

The San Jacinto is the fourth vessel to bear that name and the third in the U.S. Navy.

The first San Jacinto belonged to the Texas Navy in the early days of the Republic and was wrecked in a hurricane near Galveston.

The second San Jacinto — and the first to fly the American flag — was a frigate built in 1851 and experimented with the use of a screw-type propeller. It fought in China and also was used against Confederate vessels in the Civil War. It ran aground on a reef in the Bahamas on New Year's Day, 1865, and the hull eventually was sold in Nassau.

The most recent San Jacinto was a World War II aircraft carrier which included among its fighter pilots a young George Bush. It served until 1970.

Pitzer said there is a good chance the new San Jacinto will be berthed in Corpus Christi by the 1990s, and be attached to the battle group that will include an aircraft carrier and Battleship Wisconsin. For the time being, however, it will be with the Atlantic Fleet, based in Norfolk, Va.

The ship's nerve center is its Aegis Combat System, an extensive collection of detection devices which allows the crew to keep track of hundreds of objects.

"It has the most elite of radar systems," Pitzer said. "This is the 'star wars' approach to protecting aircraft carriers."

The system also directs missiles, rockets, anti-aircraft and deck guns, torpedoes, aircraft and helicopters. It's touted as being able to fire more rapidly and control in-flight more missiles than any other shipboard system.