

Bentsen claims he has matured since giving advice under Truman

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lloyd Bentsen said he's older and wiser than when, as a 29-year-old congressman, he urged President Truman to tell North Korean leaders to withdraw invasion forces from South Korea or threaten them with nuclear weapons.

Bentsen, now 67, a U.S. senator and the Democratic vice presidential nominee, said Tuesday he wouldn't take such a stance now if faced with a similar situation.

As a freshman congressman, he was among the first in what grew to a long list of public figures calling for use of nuclear weapons as North Korean troops pushed American and United Nations forces back down the Korean peninsula.

Truman at first denied even considering such an option, but in November 1950 he said use of atomic weapons was being considered.

North Korean troops invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. As the allied military position deteriorated, Bentsen took the floor of the House on July 12.

"What I called for was giving them seven days notice to withdraw to the 38th parallel or to use that time to evacuate their principal cities or we drop the bomb," Bentsen said in an interview on Tuesday. "That's what I did."

"At the time, you have to remember, we were losing 50,000 American and the Marines were really being booted around and we were being kicked off the peninsula. So you have to put it in that time period, and at that time we controlled the bomb."

— Lloyd Bentsen

The Congressional Record reflects similar language in his floor statement.

"We are fighting this battle with one hand tied behind us. Let us use everything we can to end this war now," Bentsen said in 1950. "There are those who will recoil in horror and condemn such action. . . . My suggestion may result in my being labeled an alarmist or an extremist, but if it should result in an earlier end to this warfare and the saving of American lives, as I believe it will, then I mind not the labels."

The speech met with a show of approval in the House, said the edition of "Facts on File" for that week 38 years ago.

Bentsen repeated his sentiments before cameras on the Capitol steps, and a film clip appeared in a 1982 documentary, "The Atomic Cafe."

Asked if he would take the same position again in the same circumstances — knowing what he knows now — Bentsen said he would not.

"I must say, I'm an older and wiser man," the Texas senator explained.

Questions of age and judgment have been raised in the 1988 presidential campaign by Bentsen and his running mate, Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. They have suggested that the Republican vice presidential nominee, 41-year-old Sen. Dan Quayle of Indiana, is not seasoned enough to be a heartbeat away from the presidency.

"At the time, you have to remember, we were losing 50,000 Americans and the Marines were really being booted around and we were being kicked off the peninsula," Bentsen said in the interview. "So

you have to put it in the time period, and at that time we controlled the bomb."

Here's the grim picture he painted in 1950:

"The seriousness of this situation is difficult to overemphasize. With each new day, our newspapers tell of American men retreating, of our troops outnumbered and outgunned. Our forces are on a peninsula surrounded by water on three sides and by the enemy on the fourth — an enemy with a force we have underestimated, Korean allies whose strength we have overestimated."

The Korean War was last until July 27, 1953, when an armistice began. U.S. losses were put at 54,660 killed and 103,284 wounded.

In explaining his stance, Bentsen said Tuesday that in 1953 then-President Eisenhower used a threat of nuclear weapons to break a stalemate with the North Koreans in the peace talks.

"Eisenhower used that same threat. . . . And that brought the North Koreans to the peace table," Bentsen said.

But Eisenhower opposed the use of nuclear weapons in Korea in 1950.

Insurance may cover plant cleanup bill

MORRISTOWN, N.J. (AP) — Diamond Shamrock Chemical Co. began its court fight Wednesday to force more than 100 insurance companies to pay for cleaning up hazardous dioxin at a Newark plant in what attorneys say could be a precedent setting effort.

The company is also seeking reimbursement from its insurers for payments to Agent Orange victims.

"This is a case involving the issue of who is going to pay for the enormous amount of cleanups around the country in the coming years," insurance company lawyer Stefano Calogero said. Calogero is involved in the case which went to trial Wednesday.

At stake is the Dallas-based Diamond Shamrock's estimated \$21 million share of the \$180 million settlement between makers of the defoliant used in Vietnam and those who sued over its effects.

The settlement was approved last July by a federal judge in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Diamond Shamrock has also committed itself to paying at least \$16 million to clean up a plant in Newark's Ironbound section, where the company produced herbicides from 1951 to 1969. Depending on the cleanup plan eventually

adopted, the cost could increase by millions of dollars more, although neither side can give accurate estimates.

Environmental officials in 1983 found huge concentrations of dioxin, a byproduct of the herbicide production, which has been linked to certain cancers, liver disease and a severe skin rash known as chloracne.

Gov. Thomas H. Kean declared a state of emergency in the area and the state Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency took emergency steps to clean up the area.

Attorneys are closely watching the outcome of the trial here, which is expected to last five to eight weeks, insurance company lawyer Robert Bates, who represents two defendants, said.

It is one of a handful of such cases to go to trial and likely to be the first with a decision. It is taking place in a state where the most environmental insurance cases — 10 to 15 — have been filed, he said.

"This is the landmark case, in some respects," he said.

DEP spokesman James Staples said, "Obviously it has precedent-setting potential."

The insurance companies charge that Sham-

rock, which sold the plant at Lister Avenue in 1971 and bought it back in 1984, purposely misled regulators and bypassed pollution controls for the sake of profit.

Because the company's action led to an "expected and/or intended" result, the insurers are absolved from having to provide coverage, their lawyers said.

In opening arguments in the trial, insurance company lawyers said Diamond Shamrock poured thousands of pounds daily of hazardous chemicals into the Passaic River, sometimes at night.

In one case, two workers were sent out in a rowboat to break up a mound of the insecticide DDT which hadn't dissolved and was visible at low tide, charged attorney Stephen Cuyler.

The dumping of herbicide chemicals into the environment was having the same devastating effect in Newark as it had in Vietnam, Calogero told Superior Court Judge Reginald Stanton, who is hearing the non-jury trial in a Colonial-style courtroom in New Jersey.

"They're pretty seriously exaggerating the situation," Diamond Shamrock attorney William Hegarty said. "It just didn't happen the way they say it happened."

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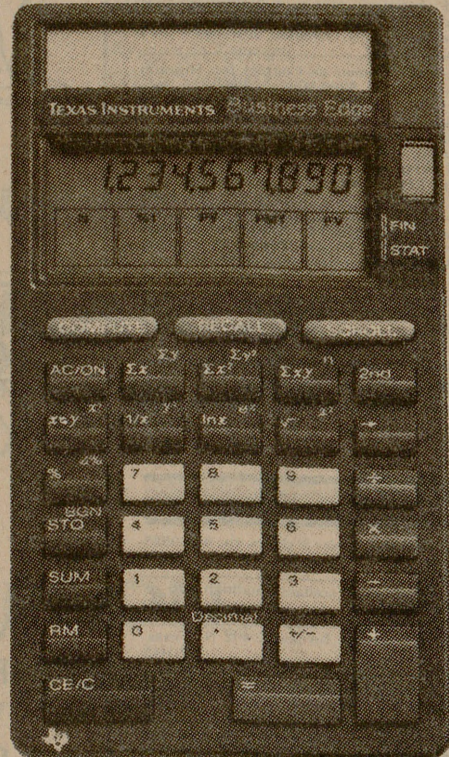
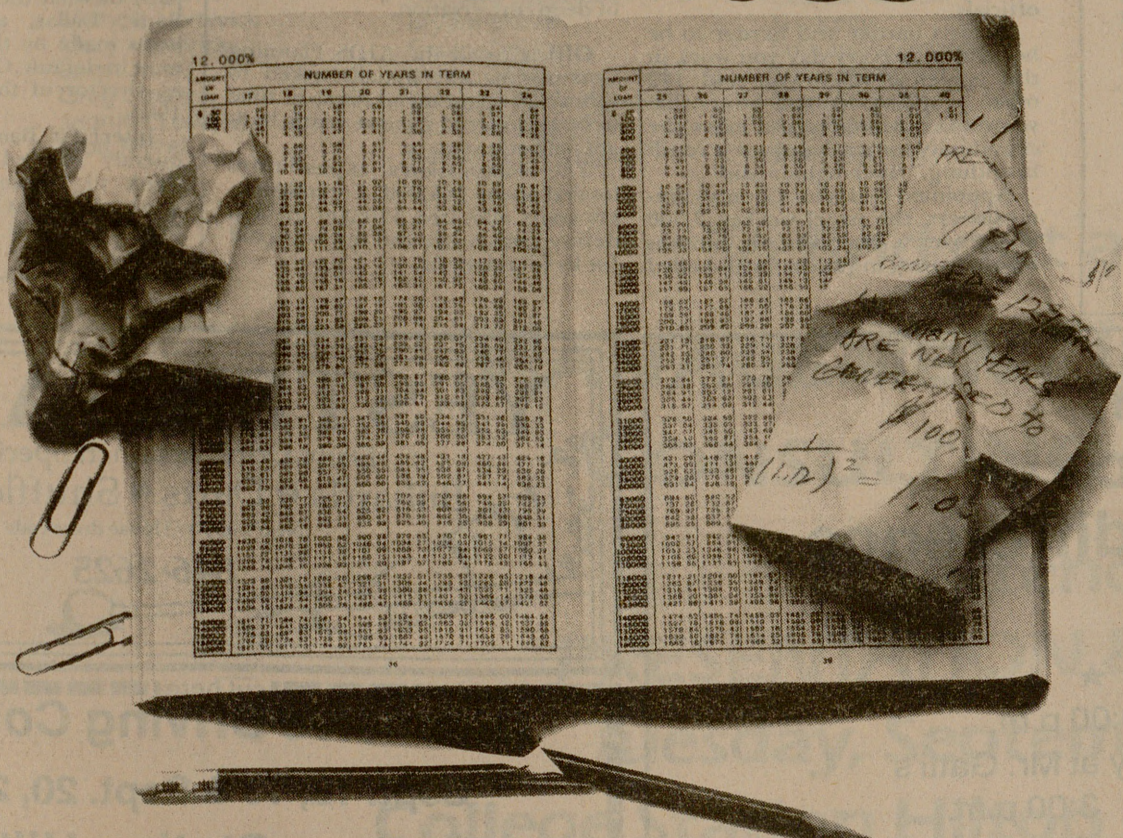
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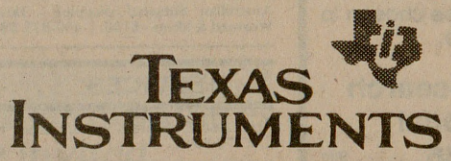


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