

Friday, July 21, 1989

Clements blames Senate for failure to reform workers' comp system

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements said Thursday he hopes political heat will force the Senate to concede to the House's business-backed approach to reform the workers' compensation system.

And that heat may have been turned up as the insurance industry said it needs an approximate 30 percent increase in workers' comp insurance premium rates.

Lawmakers failed during a special session that ended Wednesday to reform the insurance system that compensates workers for on-the-job injuries. Clements called the 30-day session specifically to address the issue.

Clements blamed the Senate for the impasse and said he will call another session this fall.

"They need to get home and feel the pulse of the people" he said. "I'm going to remind you election time is coming up, and that pressure will build up."

But senators said they weren't to blame. "The governor just doesn't know what he's talking about," Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, said.

Other senators said the governor, a Republi-

can, want to turn workers' comp into a political game and try to bash Democrats.

The state workers' comp system has been criticized as tagging employers with high insurance rates and injured workers with low benefits. But attempts to change the law have been deadlocked since January.

The House, backed by business, has tried to make it more difficult for injured workers to appeal disputed cases to a state district court.

The Senate, supported by trial lawyers and labor, has pushed for stronger job safety measures and agreed to limits on jury trials. However, it was unwilling to restrict access to the courts as much as the House.

Clements blasted members of the Senate conference committee for the impasse, and said some of them have a conflict of interest because they handle workers' comp cases in their law practices.

"If you look into the phone book, some of those senators are actually advertising for comp cases," Clements said. "These are the same people who are serving on the committees and trying to rewrite the law."

Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby said the House and Senate conferees had made progress and could produce a bill if given the opportunity. He asked Clements to call another special session before the fall.

But Clements rejected the idea. "They have had about six months of opportunity to get together and exchange ideas and it has been non-productive to date," he said. "So we'll try a little bit different approach."

If Clements calls a special session in November, it will be shortly after the State Board of Insurance receives a request for an approximate 30 percent increase in workers' comp insurance. Workers' comp premiums have increased 148 percent over the past four years.

Richard Geiger, a spokesman for the National Council on Compensation Insurance, said increases have been needed to offset claims and medical costs during a period when the Texas economy took a downturn.

Paul Wrotenbery, chairman of the state Board of Insurance, said one of his major concerns is the deficit growing in the assigned risk pool — which is set up for businesses that are unable to purchase conventional coverage.

A&M prof wants law to force MIPs to attend alcohol-awareness class

By Kelly S. Brown

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

People who drink alcohol know two things — where to buy it and how to drink it, but a Texas A&M safety educator wants to add a third ounce of knowledge — what alcohol does inside the body and mind — and he wants these facts to be learned early in life.

Dr. Maurice Dennis, who also is an industrial education professor, is pushing for a Texas law requiring minors convicted of alcohol possession to attend a class that would cover the role of alcohol in society, laws related to alcohol, advertising and how drinking affects each individual.

Dennis said he perceived a need for such a required class after results from a year-long study of minors in his alcohol education class showed many of the young people had serious drinking problems.

"I knew there was a lot of misinformation about alcohol out there," Dennis said, "but there's also misinformation about people with alcohol problems, and until this study, I was one of those naive people."

Dennis said early indicators showed many of these young people ended up in the class not just because "they got popped at the Chicken for having a beer in their hand, but a high percentage of these kids really had a drinking problem and didn't know it."

He said a survey of nearly 100 class participants found one-third of the minors exhibited problem-

drinker behavior, while more than half of them did not know their behavior was symptomatic of problem drinking.

After the evidence became clearer, Dennis wrote a proposal to the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) to develop a screening instrument that would better test whether a person has a real problem.

In the first six months of Dennis' program, 88 minors took the five hour class (broken up into two sessions), while 400 to 600 Minor In Possession citations were issued in Bryan-College Station during that same time period. Since the class is not mandatory, minors are sent to Dennis' program through a judge's referral.

Dennis said most of the class participants are Texas A&M students, but high school students often attend the program as well.

"People who have a real problem are not going to be cured in a five hour program," Dennis said. "That's why if we can identify an individual's problem early on in this class, we might be able to direct them to where they can receive help, before they hurt themselves or someone else."

The survey showed that young people are five times more likely to have a car accident with the same blood alcohol content than older people.

Nearly half of those surveyed admitted drinking to forget problems and more than half reported times they could not remember what they did while they drank.

Magazine says minimum of \$100 million needed to rank on list of richest Texans

AUSTIN (AP) — Times may be tough in Texas, but it still takes \$100 million in net worth to make the list of the 100 richest Texans, according to the first such ranking by Texas Monthly magazine.

Dallas businessman H. Ross Perot, with a net worth of \$3 billion, tops the list in the August 1989 issue.

Perot is listed as the fourth richest man in America by Forbes magazine.

Second in Texas is Dallas financier Harold Clark Simmons, 58, with an estimated worth of \$1.6 billion.

Third, fourth and fifth are Margaret Hunt Hill, 73; Haroldson L. Hunt III, 71; and Caroline Rose Hunt, 66, all of the \$1 billion Dallas hotel and oil-and-gas empire founded by Arkansas oilman H.L. Hunt.

Forbes lists Margaret Hill 39th in

the nation, with worth of \$1.2 billion. It also says Ray Lee Hunt, 46, part of H.L. Hunt's second family, has an individual fortune of \$1.3 billion and ranks him 34th in the U.S. Texas Monthly ranks him 37th in the state and says he shares his fortune with siblings June, Helen and Swanee.

Rounding out the top 10 of the Texas 100 are the Bass clan, "far and away the richest family in Texas," with holdings in oil and gas, real estate, stocks and other investments totaling at least \$5 billion, the magazine said.

Descended from the legendary Texas wildcatter Sid Richardson, the Fort Worth family members listed include Perry Richardson Bass, 74, and his sons, Sid Richardson Bass, 47; Edward Perry Bass, 47; Robert

Muse Bass, 41; and Lee Marshall Bass, 33.

Forbes lists Robert Bass as the 20th most wealthy person in the U.S., with an estimated fortune of \$1.6 billion. Sid Bass is ranked 52nd, and Lee Bass, 53rd, both with \$1 billion.

Youngest and at the bottom of the Texas 100 is Austin's Michael Dell, whose computer firm has produced a \$100 million fortune for the 24-year-old.

On the "close-but-no-cigar" roster, the magazine listed Texas Gov. Bill Clements, whose worth is estimated at \$70 million; Lady Bird Johnson, Robert A. Mombacher, and T. Boone Pickens, all with \$75 million; and William Dean Singleton, \$50 million.

The total worth of Dallas residents on the list is about \$13.5 bil-

lion; Fort Worth, \$6.6 billion; and Houston, \$5.9 billion. Twenty-three on the list are women.

Combined net assets of the Texas 100 are about \$33.6 billion. Fifty on the list inherited most or all their fortunes. Twenty-three are women.

The source of a \$200 million worth attributed to Anne Hendricks Bass is listed as "divorce." Her split from Sid Bass came with the largest settlement in Texas history, the magazine said.

Legislature ends special session after fruitless days of bickering

AUSTIN (AP) — In the end, it ended.

That's about all that can be said for the special session of the Legislature that lurched to a halt Wednesday night after 30 fruitless days of bickering over workers' compensation reform.

This failure followed the 140-day stalemate of the regular session, which ended May 29 with no workers' comp solution.

And that impasse had followed a \$450,000 study of a workers' compensation system that almost everyone said needed help.

Two days before the special session ended, Gov. Bill Clements judged the session harshly.

"We met here for one purpose and one purpose only, and that's for workers' compensation. . . . If we don't tend to that, then I would term the session an absolute failure," Clements said.

It was the governor who has insisted since January

Then, they negotiated some more.

When the final gavel fell, they still hadn't settled the three biggest differences — how to resolve disputes between the insurance carrier and injured worker when there is a disagreement over benefits, devising a method to calculate those benefits, and job safety.

Maybe the special session was ill-fated from the start. At first, Clements said he would wait to convene the special session so lawmakers would have time to hear from the grassroots.

But he changed his mind, calling the special session only three weeks after the regular session had ended.

If there was public opinion for lawmakers to hear, more time might have helped.

Then, just when some House and Senate negotiators said a solution might be in sight, an East Texas businessman strolled through the Senate chamber with a fistful of \$10,000 checks.

Chicken magnate Lonnie "Bo" Pilgrim told senators about his workers' comp costs, said he might have to move jobs to Arkansas, then offered nine senators \$10,000 checks with the payee's name left blank. They were campaign contributions, Pilgrim said.

The checks also were a public relations nightmare. Once the news leaked, nearly all the senators returned the money. Many of them said they found such a contribution inappropriate in mid-debate.

The checks had another effect: they made it almost impossible for any senator to change his vote without inviting questions about motive.

The House and Senate did find time in 30 days to repeal a law they created in the regular session — one that allowed police departments to withhold the names of felony crime victims.

That law, which had taken effect in mid-June, caused havoc and left at least one newspaper with blank space where its police blotter had been.

Clements has indicated he will sign the repeal bill. Lawmakers, following President Bush's signal, voted to make flag burning a crime and called on Congress to propose a constitutional amendment doing the same.

State approves new design of Texas plates

AUSTIN (AP) — New Texas license plates that include the state flag and its motto, "The Friendship State," have been approved by the state highway commission.

"Our state name comes from the Indian word 'tejas,' which means 'friendship,'" said Raymond Stotzer, engineer-director of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation.

Including it on our license plates spreads the word about our people's legendary hospitality and warmth," Stotzer said.

The white plates, with shaded blue borders at the top and bottom, will display the state flag, name and motto. Combinations of letters and numbers will be in blue, rather than black, and will be separated by a red silhouette of the state.

Most counties will start to issue the new plates by April 1, 1990, after the old-plate supply is used up. The new design will be only for passenger cars.

Police shoot gunman holding woman hostage in Austin med center

AUSTIN (AP) — A gunman one law officer said seemed bent on suicide held a hospital secretary hostage for about two hours at Seton Medical Center before being shot to death by police early Thursday afternoon.

Deputy Police Chief Ken Williams said the gunman, who was not a patient, was killed after charging police officers as he carried a handgun.

An officer on the scene who spoke on the condition he would not be identified said the hostage, identified by a hospital spokesman as Marsha Anderson, 64, was the mother of a police officer.

Williams refused to disclose more details, but police and hospital officials said Anderson was selected at random. She was not harmed.

"As far as I know he probably never had seen her, and she probably had never seen him — he just walked in the door," hospital spokesman M.A. Bengston said.

Williams said the officer was summoned to the hospital during telephone negotiations.

Anderson was not harmed physically, but Bengston said that as a result of the traumatic incident, the woman was with her family, professional counselors and "pastoral care people."

Williams said the man was shot after charging police. "He came out with a gun in hand," he said. "As soon as he saw where our officers were located, he pointed the weapon at them, charged towards them, and we ended up shooting him."

He said seven shots were fired, all apparently by the officers. The identity of the man was being withheld pending notification of next of kin, a spokesman for the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office said.

The officer requesting anonymity said tapes of telephone conversations indicated the man wanted to commit suicide by confronting police. The gunman, the officer said, made comments such as, "It's going to take a lot of nerve to do what I'm about to do," and "This lady may be the last person I'll ever see. I'm counting on you to do your job."

MEAT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCE JULY SPECIALS OPEN SATURDAY JULY 22nd. Table with columns for meat types (PORK, BEEF, LAMB, SAUSAGE & BACON) and prices per pound (REGULAR, SALE, 30-40 LB. BOX).

Contact Lenses. Only Quality Name Brands (Bausch & Lomb, Ciba, Barnes-Hinds-Hydrocurve). \$59.00 pr.-STD. CLEAR DAILY WEAR SOFT LENSES. SAME DAY DELIVERY ON MOST LENSES. Call 696-3754 For Appointment. CHARLES C. SCHROEPEL, O.D., P.C. DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY.

FREE HAIRCUTS!!! BECOME A SUPERCUTS MODEL-BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Our licensed cosmetologists will cut your hair July 24-28 with all the style you demand-at no cost. Just call 696-8600 for Appointment. SUPERCUTS 1519 S. Texas Ave., College Station. Men, women, children. Minimum age 10 years. Shampoo at home day of cut.