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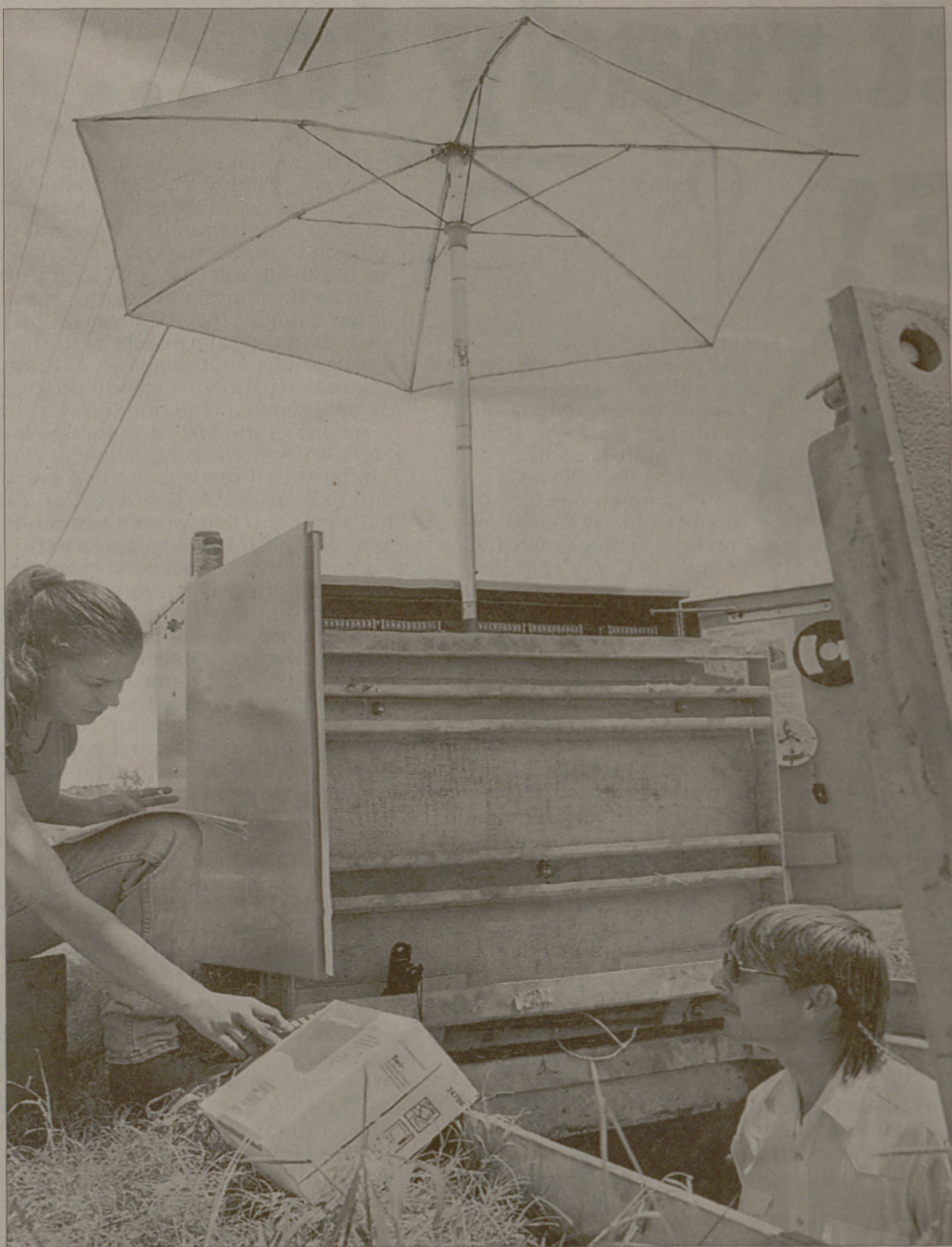
• WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23 •
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James Loving and his daughter Jamie, 19, of Caldwell work on upgrading existing phone lines to new fiber-optic lines in the Southwood Valley area Tuesday.

**Senate O
 payment
 U.N. defi**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The near-unanimous approval yesterday to pay nearly \$1 billion of a longstanding debt to the United Nations conditioned it on a reduction in the assessments.

Richard Holbrooke, President Clinton's nominee to be U.N. ambassador, has already promised to support the latest share and to fight in New York City for cutting changes sought by U.S. lawmakers.

"Budgetary discipline will be my watchword," Holbrooke told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

On a 98-1 tally, the Senate approved a State Department bill that would reduce the maximum U.S. share of the regular U.N. budget from the present 25 percent to 20 percent. It would also drop the U.S. share of peacekeeping operations from 25 percent to 20 percent.

In exchange, the bill would reduce the U.S. share of \$819 million in U.S. debts to the United Nations over three years and would require the United States to pay \$250 million, for a total repayment of \$926 million.

The United Nations has warned that it will lose its General Assembly voting rights if at least \$250 million in dues is not paid by December 31. The United States has been late on its payments for the past 13 years.

The overall measure, a \$6.4-billion State Department spending bill, passed the House, where similar legislation became snarled in an unrelated abortion issue. Such an entanglement is a possibility again this year.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the Senate's approval of the partial payment of U.S. arrears to the United Nations, U.N. spokesperson Fred Eckhard said.

"He hopes that this will be a first step in the United States making good on its obligations to the United Nations," Eckhard said.

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