

Carter asks \$3 billion in Middle East aid

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Carter administration asked Congress yesterday to provide nearly \$3 billion in aid for Israel and Egypt to bolster the Middle East peace-making process.

An administration official told the House subcommittee on the Middle East that Egypt was an example of a major success in overcoming serious economic ills.

Egypt would get \$750 million in economic assistance and \$220 million worth of surplus U.S. foodstuffs, while Israel would receive \$785 million in economic assistance and \$1 billion in credits for the purchase of U.S. military equipment.

The annual requests coincided with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's preparations for a new Camp David meeting next week with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Khalil.

State Department officials assert they still have realistic hopes an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty will be signed in the coming months.

"A major success story is shaping up in Egypt," Joseph Wheeler, assistant administrator for the Agency for International Development, told the House panel.

"Egypt sustained an 8 percent growth rate during each of the past three years.

Prospects are good for continued rapid growth."

Wheeler said Egypt has made remarkable progress in meeting its balance of payments thanks to U.S. aid and "fast disbursing Arab assistance."

"All told," he informed the House panel, "Egyptian earnings from workers remittances, petroleum exports, tourism and the Suez Canal doubled between 1976 and 1978 to a level of about \$4 billion."

The United States has provided about \$12 billion in aid to Israel since 1973, and \$4 billion to Egypt, according to Rep. Lee Hamilton, chairman of the committee.

Panel members Reps. Donald Pease, D-Ohio, and Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., expressed surprise the United States was targeting \$70 million to improve the Cairo telephone system.

"Any modern society has to have a telephone system," Wheeler replied. "The lack of it is deeply felt by Egyptians and foreigners who might wish to invest. If it had a good telephone system, Egypt could become a center of business investment in the Middle East."

Wheeler said Egypt has not yet earned a favorable reputation which would allow it to borrow large sums of money from commercial banks.

ERA chances crippled

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (UPI) — The Illinois Senate yesterday rejected a proposed rules change to simplify passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, crippling its chances in Illinois for the next two years.

Senators turned down the rules change, 24-31. Thirty votes were needed for approval.

The shift would have lowered the passage margin from a three-fifths to a constitutional majority for U.S. constitutional amendments. That would have meant a drop of six votes, from 36 to 30, in the 59-member Senate.

ERA backers had considered the rules change vote crucial to ERA's chances but vowed to continue pushing for ratification.

A similar move was pending in the 177-member House, where a change would lower the margin from 107 to 89 votes.

Gov. James R. Thompson said he was urging senators to vote for the change. But Lt. Gov. Dave O'Neal pledged to lobby against the ERA if he thought lawmakers were being pressured by Thompson and other leaders.

Peanut building for sale

ATLANTA (UPI) — The peanut warehouse owned by President Carter and his family in Plains, Ga., is up for sale, but the attorney-trustee of the operation denied yesterday it has anything to do with a Justice Department investigation of financing practices.

"The warehouse has been for sale ever since (President) Carter appointed me trustee," said attorney Charles Kirbo.

"I have discussed it (the possible sale) with people but I am happy with the lease arrangement I have with Gold Kist," he added. Gold Kist Inc. is an Atlanta-based management company Kirbo hired to run the warehouse after he became trustee.

Kirbo emphasized the warehouse is not on "the market" per se and has not been "advertised."

The Justice Department investigation centers around the financial affairs of former budget director Bert Lance, a close friend of the president, and former head of the

National Bank of Georgia. In that capacity, Lance arranged loans of \$6.5 million to the warehouse operation in 1975-76.

Investigators are trying to determine whether any of the funds found their way into Carter's presidential campaign.

Kirbo said yesterday the investigation was not a factor in his decision to sell the warehouse. He said the operation has been for sale all along, to the right buyer.

"I have had inquiries from foreign buyers but I have not discussed it with any of them," said Kirbo. Asked if he was opposed to selling the warehouse to a foreigner, he replied, "I don't know. I don't want to get into that now because it is purely hypothetical."

The peanut warehouse, begun by Carter's father, is held in a partnership. Jimmy Carter has a 63 percent interest; his mother Lillian, 22 percent; and Billy Carter 15 percent.

Social Security housework credit possible

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Social Security System could be made more fair to women by putting a dollar value on their housework and crediting them with a portion of it for their retirement, the Department of Health Education and Welfare said yesterday.

In a report, HEW also said it might be fairer to women if each couple's Social Security benefits were pooled instead of earned only by the husband. Or, the report said, it might be better to simply guarantee everyone a basic retirement payment.

The suggestions were contained in a report issued by HEW in compliance with a 1977 law that ordered it to look at ways to eliminate sex discrimination in the system.

The report listed options but did not make recom-

mendations, which will be up to an advisory panel due to issue another report in the fall.

When the Social Security System was established in 1935, the report notes, family life was more stable, with marriages lasting longer and working wives more of a rarity.

"A central issue is whether the system of dependents' benefits designed decades ago adequately serves today's society," the report said. "The present Social Security structure works best in the case of a life-long married couple where one spouse is a lifelong homemaker."

"Many believe that Social Security should be changed so that it accommodates the diversity of roles and work patterns of men and women in today's

society."

The report said married women who work "get substantially lower benefits than men workers both because they frequently spend time out of the paid labor force (or work part-time) to perform homemaker or childcare activities, and because average wages for women are lower than for men."

One limited option suggested by the report would be to provide homemakers with Social Security earnings credits based on a dollar value for their unpaid services in the home.

Such an arrangement could be financed, the report said, through general government revenues, or by requiring the homemakers to pay taxes.

Traffic deaths top 50,000 for first time in 5 years

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Highway deaths topped 50,000 in 1978 for the first time in the five years since the 55 miles per hour speed limit was enacted, federal safety officials reported yesterday.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said an estimated 50,145 people died in traffic accidents last year — almost 5 percent more than in 1977.

In 1973, when the Arab oil embargo caused long gas lines, traffic deaths reached 54,052. After the fuel-conserving 55 mph limit went into effect the next year, highway deaths declined dramatically — by about 9,000.

The annual toll has been increasing gradually since.

"We need greater compliance with the 55 mph speed limit law," said highway

safety administrator Joan Claybrook.

Claybrook also urged motorists to fasten seat belts, "the most effective safety device available in today's motor vehicle." Transportation Department statistics indicated that by late last year, only 14 percent of drivers used the belts.

Energy problems, compounded by the

cutoff of Iranian oil, prompted a renewed plea from President Carter this week that Americans observe the speed limit.

But a UPI survey showed yesterday there is considerable support for allowing higher speeds, particularly in the West and Southwest where the federal limit has come under legislative challenge.

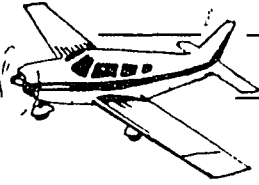
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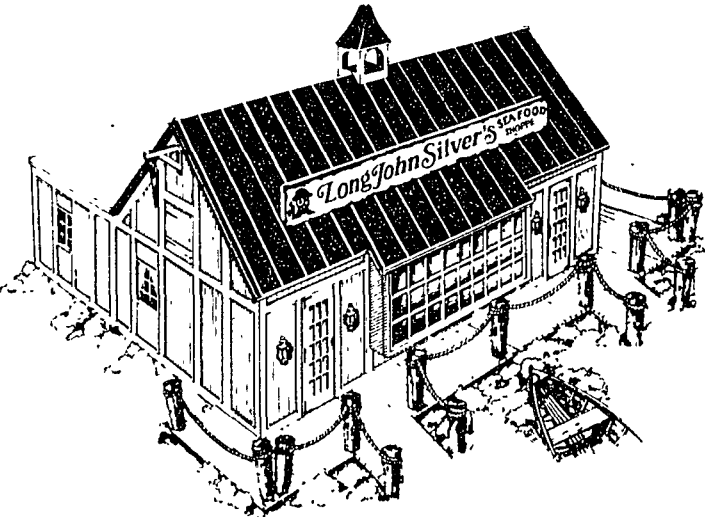
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