

News briefs:

Survey finds auto shop fraud

WASHINGTON (UPI) — An undercover survey of auto repair shops shows the American consumer had only a 50-50 chance of getting a car fixed correctly and for the right price, Transportation Secretary Brock Adams said yesterday.

The survey was conducted at 62 dealers, service stations and independent repair shops in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Miami, Nashville, Houston, New York City and White Plains, N.Y. No shops were identified, but Adams said the information is being turned over to local law enforcement officials for possible prosecution.

He said the survey showed that more than half of the \$50 billion

American consumers spend each year on car repairs — 53 cents of each dollar — is wasted on needless work.

The biggest problem area, Adams told a news conference, is engine repairs where it is "almost a sure thing" that the repair will not be made properly.

"When we took test cars into repair shops at random, we found we had only about a 50-50 chance of getting a car fixed right and for the right price," Adams said.

"What we have . . . is a variety of wasteful practices, including habitual overrepair or package deals . . . and just plain old lack of competence to do the job right," Adams said.

Hoffa linked to Kennedy death

COLUMBUS, Ohio (UPI) — The House Assassinations Committee has found "significant indications" that organized crime and former Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa were behind the assassination of John F. Kennedy, WCMH-TV reported yesterday.

WCMH-TV newsman Frank Seltzer said in a copyright report that he has learned from "a highly placed committee source" that Hoffa and two top mobsters have been linked to the assassination in an as-yet-unpublished committee report.

"According to information uncovered by the committee," Seltzer said, "there are significant indications that Kennedy's murder was arranged and executed by members of organized crime and their friends."

There was no immediate comment from the assassinations panel on Seltzer's report.

Seltzer said "the committee, in its report, will name Hoffa and mobsters Carlos Marcello of New Orleans and

Santos Trafficante of Miami as the three most likely participants in a conspiracy" to kill Kennedy.

He reported the committee will say two gunmen fired at Kennedy in Dallas and that Lee Harvey Oswald was one of them — firing three shots and killing the president — while the other gunman, who missed, remains unknown.

"This contradicts the Warren Commission report," Seltzer said, "and the committee will be highly critical of the Warren Commission investigation for ignoring the possibility of a conspiracy by organized crime."

The FBI will also be faulted, he said.

The committee, formed in response to public demand for a new look at the Kennedy assassination, is chaired by Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, while Rep. Samuel Devine, R-Ohio, is the ranking Republican, Seltzer pointed out in the first of a four-part series on the assassination report.

Diplomat freed in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (UPI) — Rebels holding the French and the Costa Rican ambassadors hostage freed the Costa Rican diplomat last night but rejected an offer of political asylum if they ended their occupation of the two embassies, officials said.

Jose Antonio Rodriguez Torth announced late yesterday that Costa Rican Ambassador Julio Esquivel Valverde, one of 10 hostages being held by 18 leftists occupying both the French and the Costa Rican embassies, had been freed.

"He (the ambassador) has been freed," Rodriguez Torth told reporters. Asked where the am-

bassador had been taken following his release, the foreign minister replied, "I don't know."

He refused to elaborate further or indicate whether the government had made any concessions to the leftists to win the ambassador's release.

But police said the leftists were still holed up inside the Costa Rican Embassy, where they were reportedly holding two more embassy employees hostage as the siege dragged through its fourth day.

Another seven persons, including French Ambassador Michel Donnenne, were also being held hostage in the French embassy.

Station owners plan shutdown

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Gasoline station owners from across the country decided unanimously yesterday to ask their colleagues to stage a four-day closing protest against government pricing policies.

Jim Campbell, executive director of the California Service Station Association, presented plans for his state's pumps to be shut down May 17-20.

A statement released after the hastily arranged, closed-door meeting said the 40 officials representing station owners coast-to-coast would endorse the shutdown plan.

Dealers are protesting Department of Energy regulations limiting them to the same profit margin allowed in 1973, although they have reduced gasoline allocations.

"Since 1974 we have not been able to pass on one cost — labor, social securing, nothing," Campbell said. "The oil companies aren't frozen. They can't push OPEC around."

"They can't push the major oil companies around. So who do they push around — the service station owners. Would you be working today for the same salary you earned five years ago? Neither can the dealers."

Senate approves liquor warning

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Senate voted yesterday to require a health warning label on all bottles of hard liquor — similar to the one on cigarette packages.

An effort to kill the proposal failed 68-21, and by voice vote it was approved as an amendment to a three-year extension and revision of the government's alcohol abuse programs.

A short time later, by voice vote, the Senate approved the \$669 million authorization bill and sent it to the House.

The warning label, which would have to go on all bottles of liquor containing more than 24 percent alcohol, would read: "Consumption of alcoholic beverages may be hazardous to your health."

The amendment was a compromise proposed by Sen. Jacob Javits, R-N.Y., and accepted by the sponsors of a proposed longer and wordier warning — teetotaling Republicans

Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Orrin Hatch of Utah.

The vote was forced by opponents of any warning label, led by Sens. Walter Huddleston and Wendell Ford, Democrats from the bourbon-producing state of Kentucky.

"The liquor industry don't want this amendment," Thurmond said after accepting the compromise. "They don't want anything that discourages the drinking of liquor."

Neither Huddleston nor Ford argued against the objectives of Thurmond's amendment. But they said the liquor industry is working on a major public information program on the hazards of drinking too much, in cooperation with the Treasury and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Huddleston, calling the amendment "precipitous," said: "There may be other warnings that are better and it would be prudent to wait and see what the best method is to do this."

S. Africa drops hiring policy

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (UPI) — The government yesterday accepted proposals that could wipe out one of the cornerstones of South African apartheid — the reservation of certain jobs for whites only.

A white paper representing the government's thinking on sweeping labor law changes suggested by the Wiehahn commission report was submitted in Parliament in Cape Town for debate within the next two weeks.

The paper said statutory work reservation has proved to be an "impractical and inadequate measure which harms race relations and is out of keeping with the needs of modern times."

The government-appointed Wiehahn commission, headed by Nic

Wiehahn, last week published its recommendations that wide ranging changes be made in the country's labor legislation, including an end to racism at the factory.

The White Paper endorsed the proposal that blacks compete equally with whites for all jobs and for an end to regulations demanding separate eating and toilet facilities in industries.

Black apprentices should also be allowed to train for jobs presently reserved for whites and be allowed to do so in white areas, the paper said.

Changes were not expected to come about overnight — both the Wiehahn commission and the White Paper urged the streamlining be done with caution and after "consultations with all the parties concerned."



Everybody loves a bargain
 These motorists are part of a line more than 100 cars long, along New London Turnpike in Clantonbury, Conn., waiting Sunday for regular gasoline priced at 29.9 cents per gallon. That price was a 20-year rollback, held as a promotion for a car dealer and a radio station.

Nader says officials allow nuclear danger

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Ralph Nader charged federal nuclear power officials yesterday with "monumental neglect" of nuclear emergency plans and congressional investigators said transport of nuclear materials endangers the public.

Nader, the consumer advocate, told the House Government Operations environment subcommittee the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor accident was a "spectacle of federal confusion and indecisiveness over how the public should be protected from the release of radioactivity."

In an interview with Cox Newspapers, Nader said yesterday all U.S. nuclear power plants — a \$100 billion industry that generates 13 percent of the nation's electricity — should be closed. Two-thirds of the 72 nuclear plants now licensed could be shut down at once with little economic disruption, he said, while

the rest could be closed within a year.

At the same time, the General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, issued a report that: "Federal agencies responsible for the safe transportation of nuclear materials have not developed and enforced policies and regulations which adequately protect the public from exposure to radiation from such shipments."

The problem is made worse because state and federal officials do not keep in close enough touch, the report said.

The GAO report said inspection of shipping containers is too lax, the allowable levels of contamination of packages is too high and some weapons-grade plutonium can be shipped without any special security measures.

The GAO covered all types of radioactivity, from medical to military. Nader zeroed in on the reactors used to generate electricity.

Contaminated water to be processed at nuclear plant

MIDDLETOWN (AP) — Technicians will start work in three weeks to clean up an estimated 600,000 gallons of water that was badly contaminated in the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, federal officials said yesterday.

Victor Stello, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's operations chief, said a system designed to process highly radioactive liquids will be in operation at the end of the month.

"This is the beginning of the plant restoration," Stello said at a briefing. "We will be removing the contaminated water and treating it through various kinds of decontamination efforts."

Stello could give no timetable on when technicians can enter the sealed reactor building and remove its 100 tons of

uranium fuel. But company officials told a 15-member congressional panel that it may be a year before it is safe enough to go inside and assess the damage.

The NRC estimates that some 400,000 gallons of water have formed a 5½-foot-deep radioactive pool on the containment building floor.

In addition, about 85,000 gallons of water used in the primary cooling system and more than 100,000 gallons of contaminated water now being stored in tanks must be purified.

Richard Vollmer, an aide to Stello who is now taking charge of operations, said radioactive resins can be filtered or the water will be boiled down to isolate the residue.

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