

state news briefs

Bell of Pa. calls for higher local rate

HARRISBURG (AP) — Local phone rates should go up because residential customers aren't paying their fair share of the phone system's costs, a Bell of Pennsylvania official told a Senate panel yesterday.

But the state consumer advocate said that the phone company is overestimating the cost of providing only local phone service, and that residential consumers are already paying their fair share.

Bernard Reza, a division manager for Bell, told the Senate Consumer Protection Committee that businesses and other long-distance customers are subsidizing the cost of local service. If that subsidy remains, they will flee the system, raising costs for smaller customers, he said.

It costs Bell an average of \$12.73 a month to provide each customer with a dial tone, but the charge for that dial tone is now only \$3.74 a month, he said. On top of that, customers pay other fees to make local and long-distance calls.

Consumer Advocate David Barasch told the panel that the cost of providing just a dial tone is much lower than Bell claims.

Lottery winner charged with theft

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A \$4.4 million lottery winner, already on probation for passing a worthless check, was charged yesterday with passing 17 more bad checks totaling \$77,877, an assistant district attorney said.

Detectives from the district attorney's economic crime unit arrested Pennsylvania Lotto winner Raymond Lenox, 40, of Philadelphia, on 26 counts of theft and 17 of passing bad checks. Lenox was being held at the Police Administration Building and was to be arraigned last night.

Assistant District Attorney Michael Weisberg said Lenox wrote the checks to 12 area merchants and an attorney for goods and services he needed to set up two night nightclubs that he had bought with his winnings. Both clubs are now closed.

Lenox is already on one year's probation imposed Aug. 20 when he agreed to make good on a \$3,495 check. He also faces trial on earlier check charges involving \$18,000, and Weisberg said "complaints are still coming in."

nation news briefs

Stamp prices may increase 3 cents

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — The cost of mailing a letter is likely to go up 3 cents, and a decision on when new rates would take effect may be made within days, Postmaster General William F. Bolger said yesterday.

Bolger told the annual National League of Postmasters convention that the rate hike probably would take effect in early 1985, with first class mail expected to increase to 20 cents from the current 17 cents.

The increase is needed because "expenses have caught up to us and have exceeded our income," he said.

The postal service lost \$1.1 billion in the last accounting period, he said, but heavy mail volume had averted a projected \$195 million loss. The accounting periods cover 28-day cycles.

FDA calls microwave ovens 'safe'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration said yesterday that consumers needn't be worried about the safety of their microwave ovens, despite a University of Washington study suggesting that microwave radiation caused cancer in test rats.

FDA spokesman Dave Duarte said the rats were exposed to radiation levels far exceeding those to which a consumer would be exposed, even by using a microwave oven frequently. There have been few problems with microwave oven leakage — most of those tested by the FDA don't leak at all — largely because the agency's standard is a strict one, he said.

"You really would have to throw them on the ground, smash them and do all sorts of things for them to leak," Duarte said.

The University of Washington study, sponsored by the Air Force, exposed 100 rats to microwave radiation for 21 hours a day for all their lives.

world news briefs

Reports on cargo plane crash differ

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — Nicaraguans yesterday claimed its troops shot down a C-47 cargo plane carrying supplies to rebels and captured the two pilots, but the rebel command said the plane crashed, killing all eight people aboard.

Capt. Rosa Pardo, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said the "counterrevolutionary supply plane" was shot down at 10 Monday morning between El Portillon and Palo Blanco in Nueva Segovia province, 105 miles north of Managua. The pilot and co-pilot were seized by soldiers.

Pardo gave no further details, but a military source said, "For the moment, we do not know their names, or their nationality, or if they were wounded or escaped injury; but we can assure you that they were captured."

The source, who asked that he not be identified, added: "We do not know what the plane was carrying, but one can suppose that it was weapons, food and medicine."

In Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the rebel Nicaraguan Democratic Force issued a communique saying a C-47 carrying supplies to its guerrillas developed mechanical problems and crashed Monday, killing all eight crewmen. The U.S.-built plane was destroyed by flames, and rebel ground units buried the victims, according to the communique.

The crash occurred in Jinotega province, which adjoins Nueva Segovia, it said.

Earthquake hits islands near Japan

TOKYO (AP) — A strong earthquake hit a series of small islands near Okinawa in southern Japan early this morning, the Central Meteorological Agency reported.

It said the quake registered 6.1 on the Richter scale, adding that there was no danger of tidal waves.

The agency said the quake occurred at 4:04 a.m. and was centered about 30 miles beneath the sea near Amami Oshima, a small island 336 miles southwest of Tokyo.

Also feeling the tremor were nearby Okino Erabu island, and, with lesser effect, the city of Nago on Okinawa island, 482 miles southwest of Tokyo.

The Richter scale measures ground motion as recorded on seismographs. A reading of 6 is considered a severe quake.

Mulroney promises new tax breaks

TORONTO (AP) — Conservative leader Brian Mulroney, enjoying a huge lead over Liberal Prime Minister John Turner one week before national elections, promised yesterday to spend \$3.2 billion on new programs and tax breaks over the next 2½ years without increasing Canada's public debt.

"We plan to finance these investments through a reduction in government overhead expenses, program reallocation and tax reform," Mulroney said in a speech to 1,500 business executives at a downtown hotel.

"And we will achieve our targets without affecting existing social programs," he said.

By making public his cost estimates, the Progressive Conservative candidate fulfilled a pledge he had made at a news conference on July 9, the day the election was called. Since then, Turner has been criticizing his opponent daily for keeping the figures a secret.

If elected on Sept. 4, Mulroney said he plans to allocate between \$300 million and \$500 million (in Canadian dollars) to new spending or targeted tax relief programs during the current fiscal year ending March 31.

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Teacher training:

U.S. educator preparation programs 'a mess,' consultant says

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A national certification test for teachers was recommended yesterday by an education consultant, who also said that as many as half of the nation's teacher training programs should be shut down.

The current process of teacher preparation is "a mess," said Emily Feistritzer, head of the National Center for Education Information.

"We really have not been paying a whole lot of attention to how we select, train and certify teachers," she said.

She urged a national board to establish minimum standards and prepare a certification test for teachers, the highlighting of good teacher education schools, and the closing of many teacher training programs that accept "anybody and everybody" without entrance or exit requirements.

"There are a lot of colleges in this country where you can show up with a high school diploma and a checkbook, and get out the other end with a bachelor's degree," the head of the private education consulting operation charged at a morning news conference yesterday.

Keith Geiger, vice president of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teacher organization, said later that his group is also concerned about the proliferation of small colleges with low standards.

Geiger said his group "has problems" with the proposal for a national competency test, preferring to see standards set by each state. But he complimented Feistritzer's study, saying she has "highlighted many problems and offered solutions."

As to shutting down a large number of teacher education programs, Geiger said, the NEA would like to see all teachers' colleges have to meet some standard for accreditation, which many do not currently do.

Feistritzer questioned the need for all 1,287 colleges offering education courses, commenting that this number has increased by more than 100 since 1973, even though the number of students entering education has decreased.

'Love Boat' torpedoed convention

By JERRY BUCK AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — ABC's "The Love Boat" cruised to a Nielsen ratings victory while a Nielsen network coverage of the Republican convention sank to the bottom, apparently the lowest-rated political convention ever, but not the least-watched.

The ratings for the GOP sessions in Dallas — which lacked suspense, or as the networks call it, "entertainment value" — fell behind those of the Democratic convention in San Francisco in July.

The four-day convention was seen in an average 16.3 million homes each night for all three networks, while Thursday night's appearance of President Reagan reached 19.1 million homes. The Democratic convention had a nightly household average of 17.2 million homes.

The highest-rated night was NBC's coverage of Thursday night, when Reagan spoke. It was 38th out of 58 shows. ABC's Thursday coverage was 41st and CBS's Thursday coverage was 44th. Three other nights of coverage were among the five lowest-rated shows of the week.

ABC won the week ended Aug. 26, with "The Love Boat" as highest-rated show. ABC had a network average of 10.6 in the A.C. Nielsen Co. survey. NBC was second with 9.0 and CBS was third with 8.8. The networks say this means that in an average prime-time minute 10.6 percent of the TV homes were tuned to ABC.

Arnold Becker, CBS vice president, said the Republican convention appeared to be the lowest-rated political convention ever covered by the networks. He said all of the data was not yet available for a definitive comparison.

Even though the ratings are lower, it will have a larger television audience than some conventions in the past. This is because a ratings point now represents more homes.

Becker attributed the low ratings to two factors: there was no suspense about the outcome of the convention and television viewers have more choices than in the past.

"In the middle age of television, when the competition to network television were independent stations located essentially in larger cities, those independent stations always did well during the conventions," he said. "Nowadays, you don't have to be in a big city to have all those choices, so it is very easy to escape the conventions."

"When you miss these business facts into the circumstance that the Republican convention was not a holy contested one, and therefore did not have entertainment value, it's not surprising that not very many people watched."

Becker pointed out that the combined network ratings for Thursday, 22.8, were about what a single top-rated show would get in the fall.

NBC's rerun of the first part of its "17" miniseries was second in the ratings, and ABC's new summer series "Call To Glory" was third.

Others in the Top 10: "60 Minutes," CBS, fourth; "Matt Houston," ABC, fifth; "The A-Team," ABC, sixth; the ABC movie "And Justice for All," seventh; "Alice," CBS, eighth; and ABC's "Webster" and CBS' "The Jeffersons," tied for ninth.

The lowest-rated show of the week was once again NBC's "Summer Sunday, USA."

CBS retained its lead among the evening news shows, with ABC second and NBC third.

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