

News Digest

By The Associated Press

House approves farm bill

WASHINGTON — The House approved a 1985 farm bill Tuesday that pins hopes for recovery of the U.S. agricultural economy on increased export sales, and meantime offers a safety net of farm income guarantees.

The vote was 282 to 141.

The five-year, \$141 billion bill includes price supports for major crops like wheat, corn, cotton, rice and soybeans, a new soil conservation package, money for agricultural extension and research and new statutory authority for food stamps and overseas food aid.

The Senate is not scheduled to act on its version of the bill until next week at the earliest. Prolonged House-Senate negotiations appeared likely before a final measure can be sent to President Reagan.

In its key elements — crop price supports and farm income subsidies — the House bill retains the essential structure of current farm law.

It continues to offer farmers loans on their crops to allow them to wait for the most advantageous time to sell, and bolsters income through direct payments that make up the difference between the price farmers receive and a pre-set "target price."

Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Texas, chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, said the bill reflected a congressional consensus that ought to "let the farmers of America know we stand up for them."

Rep. Arian Stangeland, R-Minn., who had favored a more unorthodox approach to solving farm economic problems,

called it "a warmed-over 1985 farm bill."

The bill did make one change regarded as crucial by the Reagan administration, which sees increased farm exports as the only way to restore health to an ailing rural economy. The measure would permit the secretary of agriculture to cut crop loan rates by up to 25 percent to bring prices down and make U.S. goods more competitive on world markets.

U.S. farm production has far outpaced domestic demand, and exports have grown to soak up much of American farmers' excess production. But because of high price supports, a strong dollar and other factors, farm exports have fallen dramatically in the past four years.

'Stay away,' ship's captain pleads

A man who said he was the captain of a hijacked Italian cruise line in the Mediterranean pleaded with would-be rescuers Tuesday to stay away from the Achille Lauro, on which heavily armed Palestinian pirates held more than 400 people under threat of death.

He also said everyone aboard was in good health, which appeared to contradict earlier unconfirmed reports that the hijackers had killed two American hostages to press their demand that Israel free 50 Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestinian hijackers were said to have a large supply of explosives, and vowed soon after seizing the vessel Monday night that they would blow it up if military air or naval forces tried to interfere. Flotta Lauro, the shipping line, said 413 people were aboard, including 331 crew members.

The Italian government said it would not give in to "terrorist blackmail," and also said that the hijackers "seem" to be demanding freedom for prisoners in Italy and other countries. Judicial sources have said 13 Palestinian terrorists and suspects are jailed in Italy.

Most of the Americans who had been on the Achille Lauro cruise were among about 500 passengers who disembarked in Alexandria, Egypt, before the Palestinians seized the ship about 30 miles west of Port Said. Reports indicated about one dozen Americans still were aboard.

The ship sailed west from the Syrian coast after it was denied access to Syrian territorial waters outside the port of Tartus, a diplomat reported. A Western diplomat in Damascus said it was bound for Cyprus, and Beirut port officials said it was in international waters off the coast of Cyprus. But a Cypriot government source said the ship would not be allowed to dock there.

In an earlier radio conversation with Beirut port authorities, the hijack gang's leader who identified himself as Omar, demanded negotiations with Israel.

When port officials identified themselves, Omar said: "I want to negotiate...I want to negotiate with Israel. I want you to convey this message. I want to negotiate with Israel. That's all, I want to break off now."

He said nothing about hostages having been killed. Cairo newspapers said the gang leader identified himself shortly after the hijack as Omar Mustafa, code-named Abu Rashad.

The Beirut port officials and Israeli radio monitors said the man who said he was the captain shouted into the radio later: "I have one message. Please, please, don't try anything on my ship. Everybody is in very good health."

Prime Minister Shimon Peres said in Jerusalem that no government had asked Israel to free prisoners.

The pirates say they were from the Palestine Liberation Front. The PLF is one of the eight guerrilla groups that makes up the Palestine Liberation

Organization, which split into three factions during the 1983 revolt inside the PLO against Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In Tunis, Tunisia, the PLO "vigorously condemned and denounced" the hijacking, and demanded that the hostages be freed.

Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, chief spokesman for the PLO, said: "There is no relation between the PLO and this operation. So-called Palestinians took control of the boat but we, the PLO, have nothing to do with this affair."

Cruise line operators re-examine security

By Lawrence Kilman
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — When a TWA airliner was hijacked in Greece last June, many Mediterranean travelers decided it would be safer to travel by cruise ship.

But as the hijacking Monday of an Italian luxury liner showed, even the most far-fetched movie plot can become reality in a troubled world.

"This is not something we were prepared for; it came as a surprise to everyone," said Diana Orban, a spokeswoman for the Cruise Line International Association, which represents 85 percent of the cruise lines that operate out of the United States.

On Tuesday, CLIA began polling its members about their security procedures, Orban said. The group represents 26 cruise lines and 80 ships. The Italian line that operates the hijacked Achille Lauro is not a member.

About 1.6 million North Americans took cruises last year.

It was not immediately known how the hijackers got aboard the Achille Lauro, which was on its way from the Egyptian port of Alexandria to Port Said when it was hijacked.

Although it was unlikely that the hijackers could secure the entire ship, they have threatened to blow it up if they are attacked.

"That is the big question. Do they have the explosives on board to do that?" said Kohler. "It takes a lot more to blow up a ship than an airliner. A passenger liner is like a small town."

Cruise ship security varies from port

to port, but Alexandria has one of the best security systems in the Mediterranean, Kohler said.

Passengers who sailed aboard the Achille Lauro in the Mediterranean earlier this summer reported Tuesday there was little visible security on the ship.

"It would have been easy for anyone not on the passenger list to get on the ship," said Tomas Castelo, a Santa Barbara, Calif., attorney who sailed on the Achille Lauro in August.

But security officers were on the ship, as they are on all ships, said Harry Haralambopoulos, executive director of Chambris, Inc., the general sales agents for Lauro in the United States.

In Alexandria, the government provides security, but elsewhere — including most U.S. ports — the steamship lines are responsible for their own protection.

Passengers are generally issued identity cards when boarding or leaving the ship. Many ships no longer allow visitors for "bon voyage" parties. Those that allow visitors generally issue passes that must be returned when the visitor leaves, Orban said.

Passengers, however, say that boarding passes are often not checked.

At least two movies involved the hijacking of cruise ships — "Juggernaut" in 1974 and "Assault On A Queen" in 1966. A real hijacking occurred in January 1961, when opponents of Portuguese dictator Antonio de Salazar hijacked the Portuguese liner Santa Maria as it cruised the Caribbean with 607 passengers, including 44 Americans.

Newsmakers

A roundup of the day's happenings

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Studs Terkel says he would like to be invited to Wauzeka, Wisc., to debate the school board's cancellation of a play based on his book "Working." The student production of the play was canceled last month after some parents contended the language in it as unsuitable for a high school play. The book consists of interviews with people ranging from prostitutes to business executives on how they view their work.

Lawyers for actress Vanessa Redgrave have asked the U.S. 1st Circuit court of Appeals to restore the \$100,000 a jury awarded her for damages allegedly done to her career after the Boston Symphony Orchestra canceled an appearance by her. The actress sued the orchestra after

it canceled her 1982 appearance to narrate "Oedipus Rex" because of complaints about her sympathy for the Palestine Liberation Organization. She was awarded only \$27,500 — the amount of her contract.

Protests by one state lawmaker, two dozen parents and a fundamentalist minister didn't deter sex therapist Ruth Westheimer from preaching her philosophy to a sell-out audience at Oklahoma State University. Billy Joe Clegg, a fundamentalist Baptist minister and announced candidate for governor, vowed to place Westheimer under citizen's arrest should she publicly condone sodomy, which is illegal in Oklahoma. After the speech, he tried to approach her but was escorted away by security guards.

In Brief

Innocent pleas entered in Rulo deaths

FALLS CITY, — Two men and a teen-ager pleaded innocent Tuesday to charges of murdering two people whose bodies were found on a farm where a radical religious group lives.

Michael Ryan, 37, his 16-year-old son Dennis, and Timothy Haverkamp, 23, will be tried separately beginning Jan. 28, Richardson County District Judge Robert T. Finn said. Finn ordered that the three defendants continue to be held without bond.

Attorney's for Haverkamp and Dennis Ryan requested and were granted psychiatric evaluations for their clients. Victor Faeser, attorney for Dennis Ryan, said his client later might plead innocent by reason of insanity.

Michael Ryan, the reputed leader of the group, is charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of James Thimm, 26, and 5-year-old Luke Stice. Dennis Ryan is charged with first-degree murder and first-degree assault against Thimm. Haverkamp is charged with first-degree murder in Thimm's death.

The bodies of Thimm and the boy were found in unmarked graves during a search of a farm near Rulo Aug. 18. Authorities said the Stice boy died March 25 and Thimm died April 30.

Innocent pleas were entered to all five charges at Tuesday's arraignments.

Government checks may bounce today

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration Tuesday warned the senate that government checks will begin bouncing sometime today unless the lawmakers restore Uncle Sam's borrowing power.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, who conveyed the warning to the Senate, said the Treasury was juggling its books to maintain solvency into today.

That may be enough time, he said, for Congress to negotiate an end to the stalemate that has blocked action on a bill raising the national debt to more than \$2 trillion because of a controversial amendment designed to force balanced budgets by fiscal 1991.

Nebraska MIA's remains identified

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department said Tuesday it has identified nine Vietnam War veterans, including a Nebraskan, from among the 26 sets of remains turned over by Vietnamese authorities on Aug. 14.

Air force Capt. Monte L. Moorberg of Grand Island had been missing since Dec. 2, 1966. He was 27 when reported missing. Identification was made at the Army's identification laboratory in Honolulu. The identification process continues.

Before the identifications, 2,464 American military personnel and civilians were listed as missing in Southeast Asia, 1,375 of them in Vietnam and the remainder in Laos and Cambodia.

The 26 sets of remains given to an American delegation in Hanoi on Aug. 14 brought to 99 the number the communist government has turned over.

66 dead in Puerto Rico mudslides

PONCE, Puerto Rico — Hundreds of residents of a devastated shantytown watched anxiously Tuesday as National Guardsmen and U.S. Army engineers dug through tons of wood and mud in search of their relatives and neighbors missing in mudslides and flooding. Sixty-six people are known to have been killed.

Authorities said hundreds of people were missing and thousands were in shelters after the tropical deluge.

Gov. Rafael Hernandez Colon called it "the worst tragedy ever to hit our island."

Some 400 wood-and-tin homes came crashing down the hillside in a wave of mud early Monday, after a tropical front dumped seven inches of rain in a 10-hour period on the south coast.

National Guard officers at the scene said they were moving slowly in the excavation because they didn't want to trigger more mudslides.

"There could be up to 500 people under these tons of wood and mud," National Guard Col. Johnny Rosado said.

2 kidnapped women freed in Beirut

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Two British women who were kidnapped in Moslem West Beirut 13 days ago, were released Tuesday. They appeared shaken, but apparently unharmed.

The women, 28-year-old Amanda McGrath, a teacher at the American University of Beirut's intensive English program, and Hazel Moss, 45, a former restaurant manager, were freed near the Commodore Hotel in Moslem West Beirut late in the evening.

The two said they did not know who their captors were.

Still missing are a British journalist and 11 other Westerners, all men, kidnapped in West Beirut since March 1984. Six are Americans, four are French and one is Italian.

The Moslem group that has claimed responsibility for holding the American and French hostages, Islamic Jihad or Islamic Holy War, said last Wednesday that one of the Americans, U.S. Embassy employee William Buckley, was killed in captivity.

Fourteen other foreigners have been kidnapped and released since January 1984, and two others have been found slain.

Tutu talks of letting rioters prevail

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Police said Tuesday that five more blacks were killed in anti-apartheid violence, and Bishop Desmond Tutu said he wondered if advocates of peaceful change should "sit down and shut up" and let the rioters prevail.

Tutu, the black Anglican bishop of Johannesburg and Nobel Peace laureate, though frustrated by persisting violence, said he would not abandon his advocacy of peaceful protest "because we love this land."

Police battled rioters around Johannesburg, Pretoria, near Cape Town and outside Port Elizabeth on the Indian Ocean coast.

Outside Cape Town, a wind-swept fire believed to have been started by a gas stove burned out of control for about three hours Tuesday in the overcrowded Cross Roads squatter camp for blacks. Witnesses said the fire destroyed about 100 shacks, leaving about 1,000 of the estimated 50,000 camp residents homeless. The government provided tents.