

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Committee hearing closes

WASHINGTON — President Reagan on Wednesday disputed a Democratic headcount showing his nomination of Robert Bork in trouble and exhorted the Senate to choose "statesmanship over partisanship" in voting on the embattled Supreme Court nominee.

Reagan said he is optimistic Bork will be confirmed, and both he and White House Chief of Staff Howard H. Baker Jr. challenged Senate Democratic whip Alan Cranston's tally showing at least 49 senators now against confirmation.

Baker acknowledged the administration can count only 40 votes for Bork — the same figure Cranston has — but the Reagan aid said there are just 30 sure votes in opposition and about 300 undecided "souls yet to be saved."

Cranston said of Bork on Tuesday, "I think he's licked." But his Republican counterpart, Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., predicted on Wednesday that Bork would be confirmed.

By his count, Simpson said, "We're four up with about 20 to two dozen undecided." He said of Cranston, "Al might have cooked his numbers a bit; that's not the kind of trend we see."

Reagan and top-ranking administration officials, reacting to statements by Bork critics that the nomination is endangered, took the offensive as the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing wound to a quiet close on Capitol Hill after 12 days and more than 100 hours of testimony.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Biden announced the panel will vote Tuesday on sending Bork's name to the Senate floor.



Kim Nability/Daily Nebraskan

Plane smoking ban close

WASHINGTON — The Senate transportation subcommittee Wednesday approved legislation that would ban smoking on all domestic airline flights of two hours or less.

"We feel this is the opportunity to deal with the problem," said Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., chairman of the subcommittee.

The panel unanimously adopted the measure and the full Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to consider it today.

Lautenberg's restrictions cover 80 percent of all domestic airline flights and last for three years.

"The worst place of all for non-smoking passengers and flight personnel alike is the cramped confines of an airline cabin," Lautenberg said in a prepared statement. "There's no escaping the smoke at 32,000 feet."

The provision would be part of a multibillion-dollar measure providing transportation appropriations for the 1988 fiscal year, which begins today.

In other action, the House is scheduled to begin debating a measure Wednesday that would lay the blueprint for \$28.5 billion in spending for the nation's airports and air traffic control system.

Supporters of the smoking ban, who include about 30 health groups and two flight attendants' unions, already have been successful in the House. On July 13, the lawmakers approved a measure permanently prohibiting smoking on flights of two hours or less. The 198-193 vote surprised even the sponsors.

12 die in Milwaukee fire

MILWAUKEE — One of the worst fires in the city's history swept through an overcrowded two-story house in a poor neighborhood Wednesday, killing 10 children and two adults who were about to be evicted for failing to pay rent.

Eleven of the dead were found on the second floor, trapped there when flames destroyed the main staircase, officials said. The ages of the children ranged from 11 months to 8 years.

Three adults who escaped the fire also lived in the home, located on Milwaukee's North Side, officials said.

"The children were so friendly," said Dottie Brewster, who lived in an adjacent house that was damaged by the fire. "They were happy all the time."

Lt. Charles Grisham of the Milwaukee Police Department said the deaths appeared to be caused by smoke.

The fire, reported at 4:42 a.m., started in the first floor of the house, apparently in the kitchen, said James Rechlitz, a fire battalion chief. Investigators did not know the cause immediately, but tentatively ruled out arson.

Plot to export missiles to China revealed in court

NEWARK, N.J. — Authorities have uncovered a plot to export missiles and F-14 fighter aircraft plans to the People's Republic of China involving high-ranking Chinese officials, it was revealed in court Wednesday.

The disclosure came during a detention hearing for businessman Chang-Yao Chi, 65, of Flushing, N.Y., who was arrested Sunday. He was charged with conspiracy to illegally export arms.

Chi has links to "high-ranking members of the United Nations (Chinese) delegation and the

People's Republic of China," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark S. Olinsky.

The F-14 is the U.S. Navy's primary fighter jet and the United States has never sold one to China. The missiles involved were the TOW and sidewinders.

U.S. Magistrate Stanley R. Chesler ordered Chi detained without bail after finding him a risk to flee because of his diplomatic and government contacts, who would "have the capacity and desire" to aid in his flight.

Reagan finds 'awful lot of fiction' in book

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, after telephoning the widow of CIA Director William J. Casey to offer his support, on Wednesday denounced as "an awful lot of fiction" a book that says Casey arranged for a Middle Eastern assassination attempt.

The president, in an exchange with reporters, also said he did not and would not authorize an assassination attempt and does not believe Casey undertook any covert operations without his knowledge as related in the book by Bob Woodward.

Woodward, an assistant managing editor of The Washington Post, said in an interview published Wednesday by the Los Angeles Times that his hospital meeting with Casey, in

which he described Casey as indicating he had known about the diversion of Iranian arms sale profits to Nicaraguan rebels, was "not 100 percent conclusive."

"On the reporter level, I don't have evidence. I have a nod," Woodward said. "I would not describe Casey as completely lucid."

Woodward's four-minute hospital interview with Casey, disclosed in his new book, "Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987," has brought denials from Casey's widow, Sophia.

Mrs. Casey said Sunday, "That is untrue. It's a lie. He never got in to see my husband."

Woodward said he was barred from visiting

Casey on Jan. 22, but was admitted on a later occasion.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Reagan telephoned Mrs. Casey, who lives in Roslyn, N.Y., Monday night. "He called her to offer his support," Fitzwater said.

Reagan was asked about Woodward's allegations after a ceremony in the White House Roosevelt Room, where he celebrated the Administration's privatization of government loans. At the ceremony, the president received a mock-up of a \$3.45 billion check representing profits from the sale of government loan portfolios.

"I think that there's an awful lot of fiction

about a man who was unable to communicate at all and is now being quoted as if he were doing nothing but talking his head off," the president said.

Woodward reports in the book that Casey circumvented normal CIA channels and personally arranged for three covert operations, including an assassination attempt that went awry and resulted in the death of 80 people when a car bomb exploded in a Beirut suburb on March 8, 1985.

The object of the alleged assassination attempt was Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, the leader of a Shiite Moslem faction known as the "Party of God."

Correction

In Wednesday's Daily Nebraskan KFOR-AM radio station was incorrectly said to be located in Omaha. KFOR is a Lincoln station.

In Brief

Blue Hill fire station goes up in flames

BLUE HILL — When the fire whistle sounded, Blue Hill Volunteer Fire Department officials didn't realize the blaze they were called to fight would be at the fire station.

The fire destroyed a 1,200- to 1,500-gallon tanker truck and the department's safety equipment.

"It's the first time we've had a fire in a fire station," Fire Chief Dean Karsting said.

Butte woman named Ag Woman of the Year

KEARNEY — Helen Mohr of Butte has been named Ag Woman of the Year by the Women in Agriculture group.

This is the first year for the award that recognizes the skills women have in farm-ranch management. Fastenau and her husband, Keith, raise cattle, irrigated corn and hay on their farm near Bertrand.

Audience spends nearly half a day at one play

LOS ANGELES — The "Mahabharata," a nine-hour play in three parts that has been playing to sellout audiences during the Los Angeles Festival, became even longer when a performance was interrupted by a 2 1/2-hour power failure.

The lights went out 4 1/2 hours into the production that hits the high points of a 19,000-page, 3,000-year-old story from India. But when the play ended at 12:30 a.m. Sunday, 11 1/2 hours after the audience first sat down, fewer than 20 people had left.

Dow Chemical Co. recalls mite pesticide

WASHINGTON — Dow Chemical Co. is recalling its pesticide cyhexation because of the risk of birth defects, the Environmental Protection Agency announced.

Laboratory tests show the chemical, used to control mites on fruits and nuts under the trade name Plictran, causes birth defects in rabbits and could pose a risk to the unborn children of women exposed to it, the EPA said.

Dukakis aide source of damaging tape

BOSTON — Two days after issuing a denial, Gov. Michael S. Dukakis said Wednesday he had learned that his campaign was the source of a videotape that showed Sen. Joseph Biden lifting part of a speech from a British politician.

Dukakis, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, at first refused to accept the resignation of campaign manager James Sasso, who distributed the tape, but Sasso and another staffer resigned Wednesday afternoon.

The disclosure came two days after Dukakis said he had interviewed all of his paid staff members and was assured none was the source of a videotape showing that Biden had borrowed, without attribution, a moving and apparently personal passage from speech by British Labor Party leader

Neil Kinnock.

"Although I had no knowledge of this, as a candidate in this campaign I accept full responsibility for it," a grim Dukakis said at a morning news conference.

Dukakis called Sasso's action "a very, very serious error in judgment," but had added, "I think his contributions as a public servant outweigh the mistake."

Sasso told reporters later, however, that he persuaded Dukakis to accept his resignation. Dukakis also accepted the resignation of Paul Tully, the campaign issues director who was aware of the video distribution, Sasso said.

Leslie Dach, a campaign communications specialist, was appointed acting manager of the campaign.

Women's roles focus of synod

VATICAN CITY — Roman Catholic officials from around the world will discuss giving women a greater role in church affairs — but not as priests — when a monthlong bishops' synod opens today.

Pope John Paul II called the synod, a consultative body that advises the pope on various issues, to examine

the role of the laity in church and society.

In a Sunday blessing Aug. 16, John Paul noted that the history of the church "is rich with the presence of women" and said the contribution of women has increased in recent years in the fields of evangelism, catechism, liturgy and theology.

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