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Prison problem and fiscal deficit not close to being solved

At a certain stage, the legislative session resembles a pas de deux between hell-bent on a collision course, given by engineers determined not to give an inch.

Lawmakers reached that stage last week. Why?

Overcrowded Texas prisons closed their doors again last week for the nineteenth time, the Texas crime rate was reported up 15 percent, and federal authorities stayed two death sentences here. And all the while, Texas faces a federal court order for not solving a prison problem that has lingered for years.

On top of that, the State Treasurer warns on a weekly basis that state checks will start bouncing in the fall unless taxes are raised.

And still, half-way through the session the legislative leadership

isn't close to agreement on how to solve the prison problem or fiscal deficit.

But just as the freight trains seem to avoid collision at the last minute, perhaps this Legislature will too, for the leadership is proving flexible. They just don't agree.

Latest prison solution

Governor Bill Clements altered his opposition to new taxes to support a proposal to let voters decide whether they want to bear a \$750 million sales tax hike dedicated to new prisons.

Clements said he wouldn't mind letting citizens vote on all tax issues, reviving the initiative and referendum issue.

But Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, who dislikes both dedicated funds and

I&R, killed it in the Senate, and then warned that checks definitely will bounce soon unless \$2.5 billion is raised.

Then Comptroller Bob Bullock reminded lawmakers they had until April 1 to pass the issue of whether the revenues to be spent in the 1988-89 budget. That's the latest date to hold a constitutional election within the current session.

But House members led by Tyler Rep. David Hudson said they had 70 votes, enough to kill the lottery in

the House. "The lottery is a dead skunk in the middle of the road," Hudson said.

Bullock also wrote lawmakers to advise them not to require his agency to oversee the lottery, if it is legalized. "The idea is for us, and frankly, we've got our hands full with our current tasks."

For emergency purposes, the lottery seems dead, although time remains to pass it for long term revenue goals.

The Senate

Texas Senators approved and sent to the House measures to allow limited alimony payments here for the first time, to allow the state to condemn ingress-egress easements through private property to get to

State Capitol Highlights By Lyndell Williams

Speaker Lewis joined supporters of a bill allowing private citizens to carry handguns, despite opposition from lawmakers. But Lewis, who owns a gun shop in Fort Worth, said police officers are overreacting. Only Texas bans carrying handguns.

If passed, citizens of sound minds could carry guns everywhere except to school grounds, polling places, government offices, places that sell alcohol or white drinking and driving.

The House also voted to allow prison guards to use force against inmates for self-defense or to prevent escape.

The House

who did so much to make the melodrama such a success. A big thank you to everyone who helped in any way!

Would you like to see on display in one of the glass cases what is probably the smallest size bottle of Dr. Pepper ever made? Tim A. Weeks of Eagle Lake has loaned us a 6-oz. bottle with the Dr. Pepper still in it. The bottle and its contents are evidently about 60 years old. I believe Dr. Pepper was first made in Waco, Texas.

Walter Lee Bauer has donated two very interesting books that once belonged to Mrs. Fritz Engelhardt. These books feature drawings of the beautiful Gibson girls by C.D. Gibson and also outstanding drawings by James Montgomery Flagg. The date on the latter collection is 1902.

We soon expect to see all six of the display cases being readied by Rollin Baker, Bill Harrison Sr. and Bill Wilson exhibiting items that should attract much attention. The cases have been placed in an alcove arrangement in the large front room. Four of these cases are already or soon will be featuring exhibits of the following categories: Rice, Theatricals, Sugar Cane, Goose Hunting Capital. There probably will be no problem in presenting an exhibit in the track meet at Wallis last Friday were: Clark Powers, first in the 100 yard dash and 60 yard high hurdles; Rudy Luna, second, clinching; Frank Torres and John David Kon, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 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