

Bankruptcy's a breeze, thousands of Americans find

By MARK FINEMAN Of the Call-Chronicle

Thousands of America's debt-weary consumers are beginning to discover a foolproof refuge from the ravages of inflation.

They're going bust. Personal bankruptcy, viewed for nearly 200 years as the last stop before the poorhouse, has become almost fashionable in 1980, as consumers from all income brackets are finding themselves buried deeper in their own over-

spending.

In the past six months alone, more than 100,000 Americans — 150 of them from the Lehigh Valley — have learned that filing for bankruptcy can actually be a painless remedy for their personal financial ills — losing little, if any, of their belongings in the process.

And the remedy is legal — courtesy of the federal government. It comes in the form of a new bankruptcy code that took effect last Oct. 1, and at the heart of its emerging popularity are new

guidelines that allow debtors to protect tens of thousands of dollars worth of assets — their house, cars, jewelry, furniture, appliances, clothes and even equity in boats and helicopters — from their creditors' grasp.

Nowhere in the entire country have the new regulations had more of an impact than in Pennsylvania, where, for nearly 150 years before the recent federal law, bankrupt individuals were allowed to keep only the clothes on their backs, their Bibles, a sewing machine and \$300 in other personal

property.

But just as the new bankruptcy laws have become a panacea for the cash-poor consumer, they've become a nightmare for creditors — retailers and other businessmen who have liberally extended large amounts of credit in the past few years. And, as those retailers must now begin writing off the losses from their better-protected bankrupt debtors, they are hiking the prices of their goods to help cover those losses — further fueling the inflation that was, in part, born of that

same overly generous credit and over-

spending. "The new bankruptcy laws might well solve the inflation problem for one person," said Allentown Atty. David C. Schattstein, a specialist in bankruptcy. "But it will also push the burden on everyone else."

And critics of the new liberal bankruptcy laws are as easy to find as their supporters. Six states already have passed more conservative legislation to supersede the generous personal

asset exemptions allowed under the federal law. Similar legislation is now being debated in Pennsylvania's Senate, though its chance of passage this year looks unlikely.

And at the center of the debate is the whole philosophy behind bankruptcy laws. On the one hand, Congress approved the new guidelines because it believed that the American consumer, badgered and beleaguered by inflation and nagging creditors,

See PAINLESS Page A10



Presidential candidate Bush makes point from flatbed trailer at Clearfield County coal company.

Photography by BURT SWAYZE

Bush's Pa. push a low-key, tranquil affair

More delegates for Carter, A7

By JOYCE HOFFMANN Of the Call-Chronicle

"I'm involved in a long, grueling fight for the presidency. Nobody said it was going to be easy, and nobody was right."

George Bush Stevens Point, Wis., March, 1980 on the Bush campaign trail — It's gray, dreary and drizzling outside as George Bush's campaign plane touches down in Philipsburg for yet another media event in another small town in front of another cordial audience. He's in central Pennsylvania, heading for the Bradford Coal Co. in nearby Bigler.

There are no roaring crowds, not even a few curiosity seekers straining to see this man who wants to live in the White House. Just a man welcoming party — two of whom are Bush staffers.

The Bush push in Pennsylvania — where he faces a crucial one-on-one contest with Ronald Reagan on April 22 — is a low-key, tranquil

affair. There's an occasional spark, but it's never quite intense enough to ignite into flames. With a beige raincoat over his nondescript gray suit, Bush bounces down the gangway — energetic, lean and smiling.

It's Thursday — day three of the 12-day campaign schedule Bush has planned for Pennsylvania. And the agenda is packed: Three flights, eight motorcades and four speeches with chicken on the afternoon and evening menus — Kentucky Fried for lunch and oven-baked for dinner.

He's already talked to 400 disgruntled retailers in Pittsburgh and received a rousing welcome from students at the Carnegie-Mellon Institute. Still to come are the coal miners and the GOP loyalists in Greensburg, who also have invited Ronald Reagan to their annual dinner tonight.

He's been hitting hard all day, blasting Jimmy Carter's "phony promises" and Ronald Reagan's "yoo-doo economics." The Bush campaign might be short on momentum, but it's long, very long, on optimism.

He's giving it the old college try. Bush comes

armed with an impressive resume, an appealing, moderately conservative philosophy and a "go get 'em" outlook. He's touted by supporters as the thinking Republican's presidential choice. But GOP voters have given Reagan a sweeping lead and to some observers it looks as if Bush is fighting the California steamroller with a sling-shot.

Bush bills himself as "A president we won't have to train," a reference to his background as former head of the CIA, U.N. ambassador, special envoy to China, two-term congressman and chairman of the Republican National Committee. But voters seem to prefer his rival — the man who says, "Let's make America great again."

As the long motorcade rolls closer to the coal processing plant, the drizzle turns into a steady rain, but it's too late to move the festivities indoors.

"This is the first time a presidential candidate has ever come to Clearfield County," says one worker in the crowd that gathered near the coal company railroad tracks.

See BUSH Page A2

Olympics panel votes to keep U.S. team home

By TOM SEPPY Of The Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Bowing to pressure from President Carter, the U.S. Olympic Committee's House of Delegates voted yesterday to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow because of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

The delegates voted by a 2-1 margin to keep U.S. athletes at home unless Carter advises the USOC on or before May 20 that the international situation has changed and the United States could send a team.

The vote was 1,684 in favor of the resolution and 797 against, with two abstentions.

In Washington, White House press secretary Jody Powell said Carter "welcomes the strong vote."

But, in his written statement, Powell said: "The President has authorized me to say that this advice to boycott the Games will not change by May 20 or at any time thereafter. For all practical purposes, therefore,

the House of Delegates vote means the United States will not send a team to Moscow."

If the United States did wish to send a team, it would have to accept the invitation from the Moscow Olympic Organizing Committee before May 24.

When Carter originally called for the boycott on Jan. 20, he gave the Soviets one month to get their troops out of Afghanistan. After that deadline passed, he said he could not envision the United States sending a team to Moscow even if the Soviets were to pull out before the deadline for accepting the invitation.

Robert J. Kane, USOC president, said after the delegates had voted that "our patriotism and the support of the United States had to be preserved."

F. Don Miller, USOC executive director, said the "great majority" of delegates rejected by voice vote a Carter administration suggestion that alternate games be staged.

See OLYMPICS Page A14

THE IRAN CRISIS: DAY 162

Allies warn Bani-Sadr they'll back sanctions

The Associated Press

America's Western allies and Japan reportedly warned Iran yesterday they "will follow American policy on Iran" unless the 50 hostages in Tehran are released within a certain time period. President Carter said he has fixed a "specific date" by which time he expects the Europeans to take fresh action against Iran if the hostage crisis is not settled.

Carter said in an interview with television correspondents from Britain, France, West Germany and Italy that "we don't have much time left" in which to consider new moves against Iran, including the possible

use of force. He did not mention the date he had given the European allies.

Carter said he is asking the allies to impose sanctions and "join us in strong diplomatic moves" against Iran if the hostages are not released. The United States cut off exports to Iran and broke diplomatic relations last week.

Iranian President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr's press adviser, Mousavi Garmaroudi, said on Iranian television last night that the ambassadors of European Common Market nations

See IRAN Page A14

Liberian leader killed in coup

The Associated Press

Liberian President William R. Tolbert Jr., one of America's best friends in Africa, was shot to death and his government toppled yesterday in a military coup, according to reports from the country.

Radio Monrovia and Western diplomats said Tolbert, president of the Organization of African Unity, and a bodyguard were slain during an early morning raid on the presidential mansion in the capital of Monrovia. The British Broadcasting Corp. in London quoted a doctor at the mansion as saying Tolbert, who was 66, was shot three times in the head.

The West African nation's new leader, identified as Samuel K. Doe, a 28-year-old master sergeant in the Liberian army, said in a radio broadcast monitored in Washington that he had overthrown Tolbert's government because of its "rampant corruption and continuous failure" to cope with the nation's problems.

During the same broadcast, Doe said the army would rule the country "until a decision was reached." He did not elaborate but said he summoned the governor of the national bank and the army's chief of staff and brigadier general to the executive mansion. He also said he appointed 15 officers and non-commissioned officers, none of them above the rank of captain, "superintendents" to direct the country.

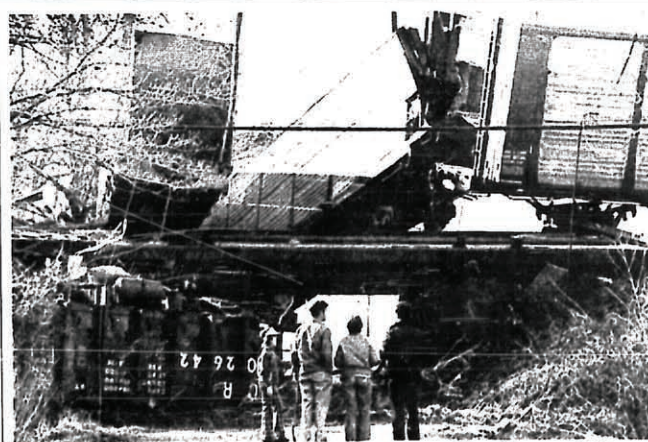
"All foreign governments are advised that the state of affairs in Liberia is under control and life and property of citizens and foreigners alike are



fully protected and secure," the statement went on. "Therefore the People's Redemption Council of the Armed Forces of Liberia requests and expects the support and solidarity of all foreign governments."

Doe reportedly carried out the coup with the help of junior officers and the backing of army generals. Liberian diplomats based in Western Europe called Doe a "complete unknown." Little was known about the new government's political leanings.

See LIBERIAN Page A3



Two-train derailment near Quarryville. Page A6

McDonald's MacArthur Rd. & Cedar Crest Drive Thru's Now Open

Free Tennis & Racquetball Instruction Weekly at Vantage Point (No Membership Req.) Call 395-3337

Action Auto Parts — 254-5466 Open Nights — Open Sunday

Richmer Florist & Greenhouse Now Open Sundays 9 to 3! Ph. 437-6288

Water Wells—Pumps—Service R H Odenheimer Co. 791-4353