

MAY 21, 1987

Our state officials are beginning to pay a lot of attention to gaps left in the tax harvests after the big oil market collapse and the agriculture depression that's been on and off down here since the founding of Texas. Competition is keen to find a tax base. County assessors are so hard pressed that citizens dare not yawn in their presence for fear that any new fillings will be added to their renditions.

All kinds of old and new schemes are being proposed. When I was in the capital last week, I was told that a prominent Central Texas lawyer and banker had already started building a race track in case pari-mutuel betting was legalized. This particular fixer and jugkeeper has a win record a lot higher than any running horse ever known of. Anytime you come across one of his projects, the dominant theme is depth of the hundred dollar bills being made from the game.

The most offensive thing to me about bringing in horse racing is the parties that are going to be riding the horses. Just the other day I read about a jockey that was getting back in shape by working out on a rowing machine. I'd always suspected that those maestros of taut bridle reins and broken-stride rail acts were more suited for paddling row boats than to jumping Thoroughbreds out of a starting gate.

I'd prefer they legalize bull fighting over horse racing. In Spain it takes 5000 bulls a year to service the sport. Most of the oxen in the Shortgrass Country are more inclined to break down fences and go under water gaps than to fight, but think of all the cowboys and excitement it'd take to keep 5000 head under herd and partially under fence.

Something else that's being done: the Commissioner of Agriculture is promoting buffalos instead of cattle and sheep on the ranches. I suspect His Honor thinks that once buffalo ranching catches on, it'll be so simple we herders can be moved into the cities to take jobs and become useful citizens.

It might be a good idea to switch over to the brown humpies. All but about two percent of the bankers in Texas are so sick of cattle that were they to go to the hospital the nurses would have to force them to so much as sip a taste of beef tea. Even with today's good cattle markets, it might be a good idea to have a buffalo robe to wear to the bank in place of a pair of calfskin boots.

Other than a short outbreak of steam just before the election, the worthies haven't shown one bit of enthusiasm for reducing spending. In the modern chambers at any level, a slight tap of the gavel will table that matter. An order for 5000 Spanish bulls would sure perk things up. With so many fossil fuel miners out of work, I don't think it'd be hard to find plenty of matadors.