

Energy answer may be in forests

Agriculture and forest residues, usually wasted, could help solve the present energy crisis. That is what a famed ecologist says.

Dr. Stephen H. Spurr, a University of Texas forest ecologist, says agriculture by-products and wood provide "vast unrealized potentials for substituting renewable for nonrenewable energy resources."

Spurr, speaking at Michigan State University as the 1979 Distinguished Agriculture Lecturer, said: "Agricultural residues... may well find increased utilization for fiber and for fuel. The potential for increase is great. Sugar cane fiber and cereal straw are potentials for industrial fuel use."

"Other plant residues and cow manure from feedlots are also potential sources of biomass that could be used for fuel or chemical manufacture."

Spurr said there is an equal, if not greater, potential energy source in our forestlands, "provided proper management is used."

"Worldwide, the principal use of forests is to produce wood for fuel," he said. "Even in the U.S., where the use of wood for fuel is negligible, it is finding increased use as the costs of alternative heat sources continue to rise."

"The potential capacity of the world's forests to produce electricity in the future is substantial. While obviously much of the world's forest biomass is not, and never will be commercially harvestable, it seems likely that forests can produce much more of the world's energy supply than they do today."

"Improved forest management practices could increase U.S. wood production by 20 percent. With present logging practices, much woody material is left in the forest and much more is left unused in the processing plant."

Spurr said that wood residues from mills and from waste liquors in pulp mills can be used economically not only to provide process heat, steam and electricity for the mills themselves, but also some excess energy which might be used by surrounding communities.

Family will remain core, says expert

In the 1980s, families will remain a "core focus" of society, and the United States a "nation of upper middle income families," says a Michigan State University marketing professor.

William Lazer predicts that by 1985, 23 percent of U.S. families will earn over \$35,000 and 25 percent will have incomes of \$25,000 to \$35,000.

By 1985, he says, "marriage will be more popular, as will divorce, but divorce rates may slow."

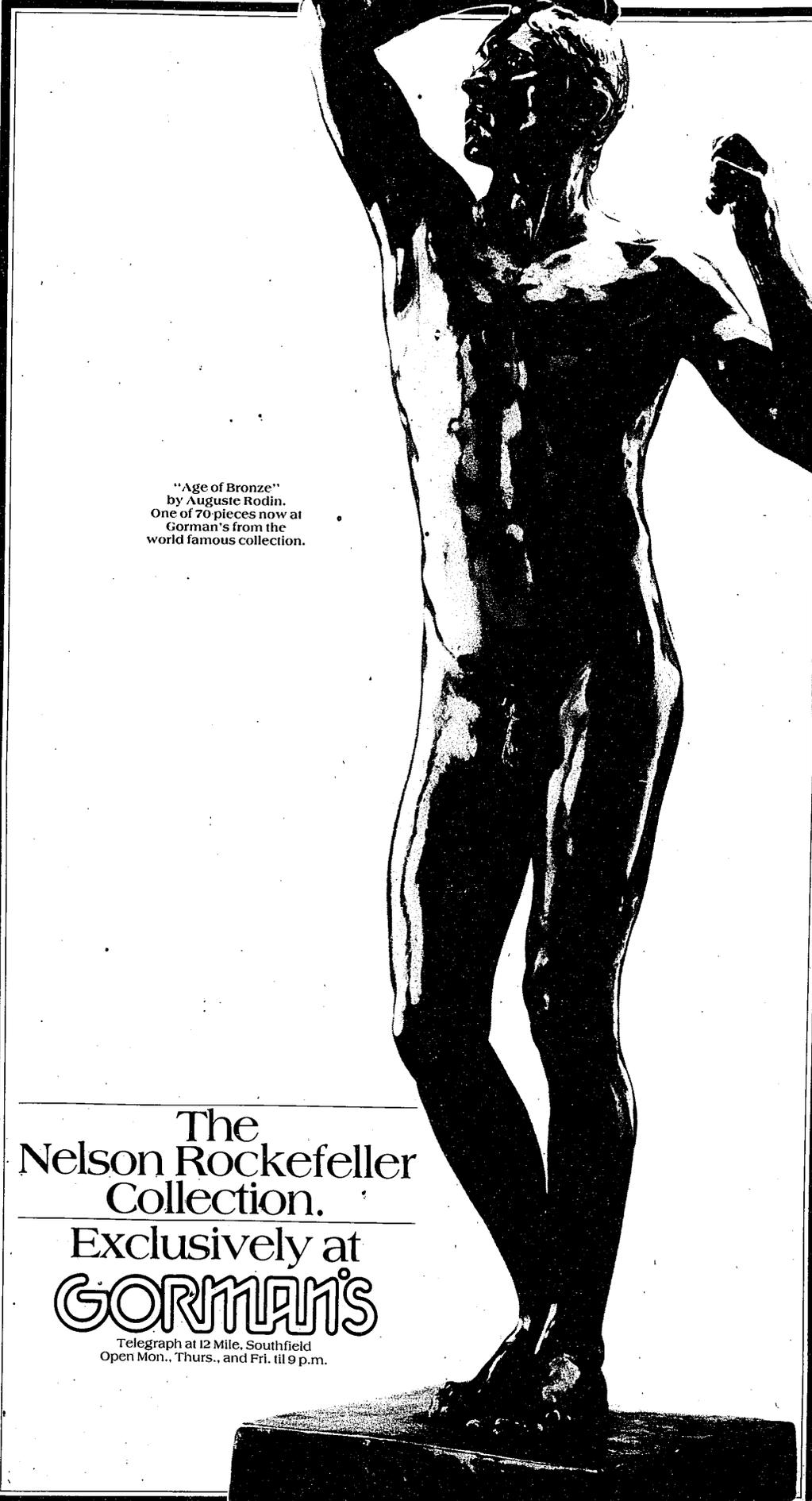
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