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Forget The Tunnel

THERE IS a certain contradiction in the finding by Transportation Secretary Brock Adams that the only route he will allow I-40 to take through Overton Park is a tunnel that would cost an estimated \$180 million.

By law the secretary cannot allow such an interstate road to encroach upon a public park if there is a "prudent and feasible" alternative.

By saying that he will allow the road to go through a tunnel, and only through a tunnel, Adams is saying that route is a prudent and feasible alternative.

Well, in Washington where bureaucrats and legislators bandy terms like millions and billions about as though they were peanuts, maybe \$180 million doesn't look like much. But here in Tennessee, that is a whopping lot of money. Even the 10 per cent of the construction cost which the state would have to cover looks like a pretty big chunk out of the state's highway budget.

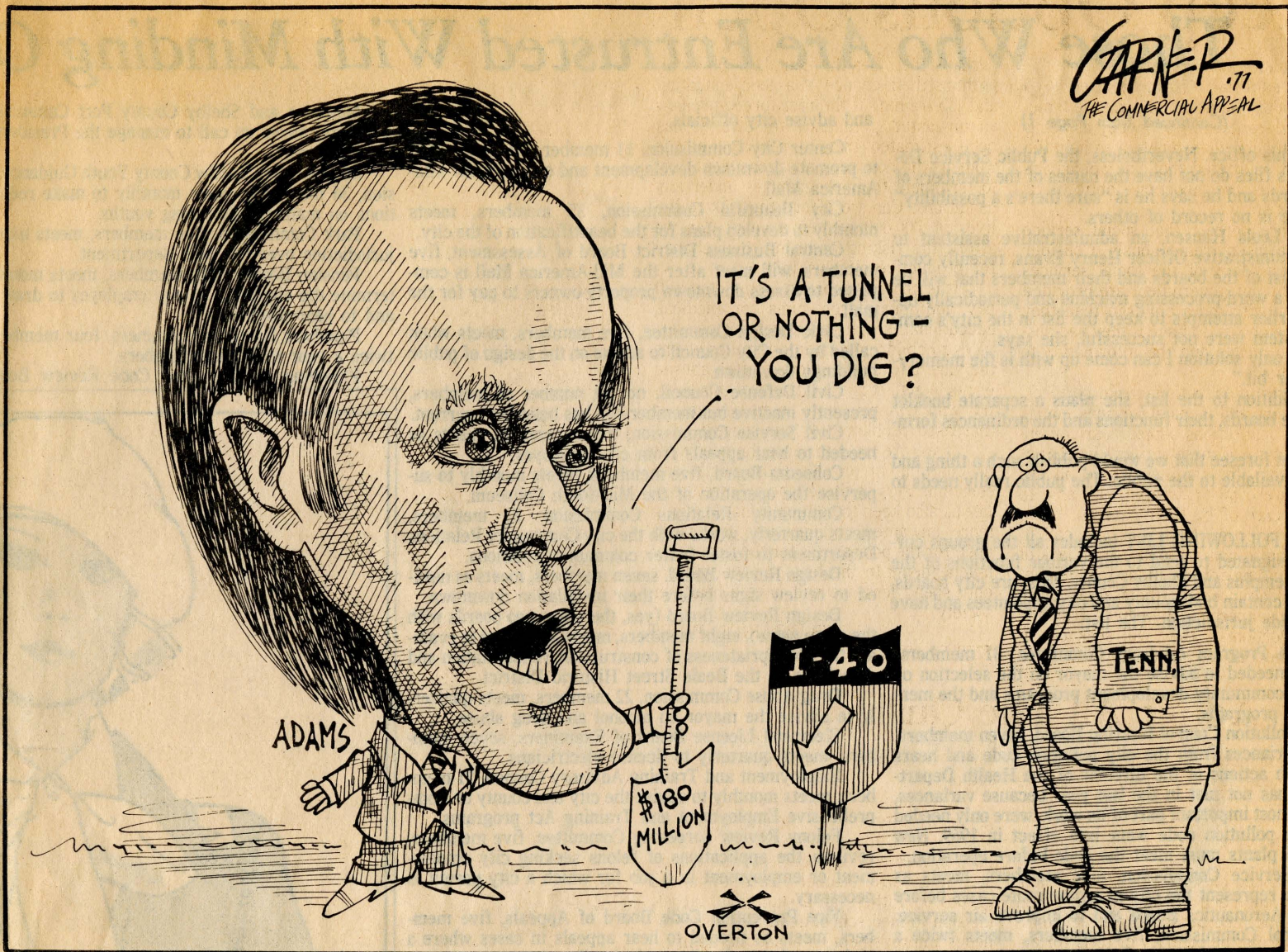
And when \$2 million a year is added to that construction figure just to operate and maintain that hole in the ground, the total hardly looks "prudent."

Then there also is the question of whether such a tunnel really is feasible.

What Adams is trying to foist on us is a highly complex engineering project. Nobody really seems certain that it will be possible to divert the underground bayou that runs through the park to make way for the tunnel. If after spending \$180 million dollars the engineers find their fancy pumping arrangement doesn't work, we could, as Gov. Ray Blanton has said, find ourselves the owners of "the world's longest swimming pool." And the costliest, too.

SO WHAT WE are being offered is an alternative to the "through-the-park" route which definitely is not prudent and which quite possibly may not be feasible.

Blanton is right in rejecting this proposal.



CA.
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