

The Carolina Review: ESC Gets Temporary Reprieve

ESC ... The "time-buying" announcement was made last week that endangered N. C. Employment Security Commission (ESC) offices will remain open at least until the end of March. The temporary reprieve was gained through an ESC vote to use \$1.9-million from an emergency contingency fund.

The announcement probably made little difference to the 200 or more ESC workers that will have to be laid off next month to accomplish needed personnel cutbacks.

Rumors had been flying since December that wholesale shutdowns across the state would take place as

a result of Congressionally-approved federal budget cuts. Internally, ESC workers have been plagued by fears of mass lay-offs and cutbacks since last spring. ESC is federally funded, but administered by the state.

Finally, two weeks ago, ESC officials announced that 48 of 85 local and branch offices would be closed. As could have been expected (and probably was), that announcement drew an immediate statewide response - blanket disapproval.

"Why cut back over 50 per cent of the services with only a 12 per cent reduction in funds?" everyone asked, especially those in the af-

ected areas. State officials pointed out that the cutback was retroactive to October and the federal mandate required \$1-million of the cut to be in non-personnel services like rent and utilities.

Republican officials charged state Democratic officials were trying to make national Republican budget cuts look worse than is the case.

N. C. Senate minority leader, Donald Kincaid, R-Caldwell, accused Gov. Jim Hunt of playing politics with the issue. "I'm convinced we don't need to close 48 offices," Kincaid said in a released statement.

Politics or not, Hunt now seems to be trying desperately to keep the offices open.

"That's practically all I've been working on this week," reported Gary Pearce, one of Hunt's top troubleshooters. Pearce said the governor was moving on two fronts, and

possibly a third, to save the ESC offices.

"First, we're going into all of the counties to see if we can get donations of money for utilities and (or) free office space ... Larry Blake (N.C. Board of Community Colleges' president) has already polled his schools and reports that two-thirds of them can offer free office space," Pearce said.

But one ESC worker remained unimpressed. "So you're going to chose a four-man office then and set up a desk in a community college. What's that going to do?" they asked. According to the worker, who wished to remain unidentified, the "services will be nil - and the person at the desk will probably have a nervous breakdown."

A more permanent solution would be Congressional restoration of the funding - the governor's "second front."

"We don't think Congress realized what the impact

would be," Pearce said, "a lot of governors are really upset. South Carolina has already had to close 9 of 33 offices."

Pearce refused to speculate, however, on the chances of Congressional rescue, but he did offer that as a real possibility.

"Our Washington office has already talked with Reps. Hefner and Andrews. They're both extremely concerned and willing to try something," Pearce said.

Rep. Hefner is on the House Appropriations Committee and Rep. Andrews serves on the House Education and Labor Committee which has jurisdiction over the ESC. Both are Democrats.

If nothing else, Pearce says, the governor would like to have a little more flexibility in how the state can spend the ESC money. That would be the third option. As it is, the fed stipulates personnel and non-personnel funding.

Pearce hinted at what

could be a major stumbling block in working with Congress on the problem. "One fortunate hindrance in trying to rescue the money is that apparently ESC is not as universally popular in other states as in North Carolina," he said.

BNC Winner

RALEIGH - Daisy G. Lane is one of the winners of the Bank of North Carolina's 1981 Incentive Program, it was announced by president and chief executive officer, Charles F. Merrill.

A native of Perquimans County, Mrs. Lane won second place in the statewide promotion. The purpose of the incentive program was to increase sales efforts and bring in new deposits, and was open to every bank employee.

Mrs. Lane joined BNC in 1977 and is a member of the Jaycettes, the P.T.A. and is a band booster. She has one daughter, Sheri.



BRAVE? PHOTOGRAPHER CHALLENGES TOWER ... FAILS!-Creywood Oil Co. of Edenton recently had a two-way radio-communications tower installed at their facility. The 190 ft. tower was erected by Rainey & Sons Tower Service of Suffolk, Va., 14-year veterans at this work. Staff photographer, Jeffrey W. Winslow, above, went up the narrow tower approximately 70 feet before suddenly remembering business elsewhere. The photo was taken by Charles Rainey of Rainey & Son Tower Service, who was 15 ft. below Winslow.

CRC Agenda Is Set

At its February 4-5 meeting, the Coastal Resources Commission will examine proposed rules for the beach access program, receive an update on planning for Radio Island and review its hazard area development program. The group will also discuss proposals for protecting fisheries habitat through water quality standards. The meeting will be in Atlantic Beach at the Ramada Inn.

The commission will discuss directions for developing rules to implement the beach access program authorized and funded by the General Assembly and approved by the CRC in September.

The commission will hold a public hearing at 10 A. M.

on February 4 to receive comments on the proposed repeal of rules governing interim areas of environmental concern and vertical separation requirements for septic tanks.

A standing committee will consider revision of the Commission's minimum civil penalty schedule. The proposal would allow greater flexibility in assessing minimum penalties where violations were unintentional and immediately repaired.

The Coastal Resources Commission invites public comments during its meeting at 3:30 P. M. on February 4 and land use plans submitted by the towns of Atkinson, Navassa and Surf City.

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