

COMMENTARY

THE TAR HEEL

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Looking inside

The N.C. Utilities Commission's decision Tuesday to audit Carolina Power & Light Co. is a welcome and responsible choice that had to be made. As a public utility, CP&L, which supplies about 40 percent of the state's power, is accountable to North Carolina citizens who have increasingly grown concerned about the utility's performance and ability to meet its demand.

CP&L especially has had problems with its two Brunswick nuclear units near Southport. Unit 1 was shut down July 6 and it is not expected to continue service until October. Unit 2 was just returned to operation Monday after being shut down July 18.

The problems of CP&L's three nuclear units, which supply energy at the cheapest price, can be seen in the decreasing amount of energy the units have produced for CP&L in the last three years. In 1978, 47 percent of CP&L's power was generated by its nuclear units. In 1979, that number fell to 36 percent and last year the amount of nuclear energy produced fell to 28 percent.

As the amount of nuclear energy produced falls, CP&L must seek alternate, more expensive forms of producing electricity, and consequently, customers' bills rise. The loss of each Brunswick unit costs CP&L about \$300,000 a day, which is passed on to consumers. CP&L asked the utilities commission last week to increase its October and November bills by 8 percent. CP&L has already requested a 16.4 percent rate increase to take effect in December. The public will no longer accept rate increases without knowing what is causing the problems at CP&L.

The audit, which will not begin for several months, will be a broad-scale management audit. The Utilities Commission's Public Staff, which represents consumer interests, has also said it would begin a separate investigation of the Brunswick problems. Hopefully, both the needed audit and investigation will give the public a look into a company whose operational problems continue to cost the public more and more.

Fantastic voyage

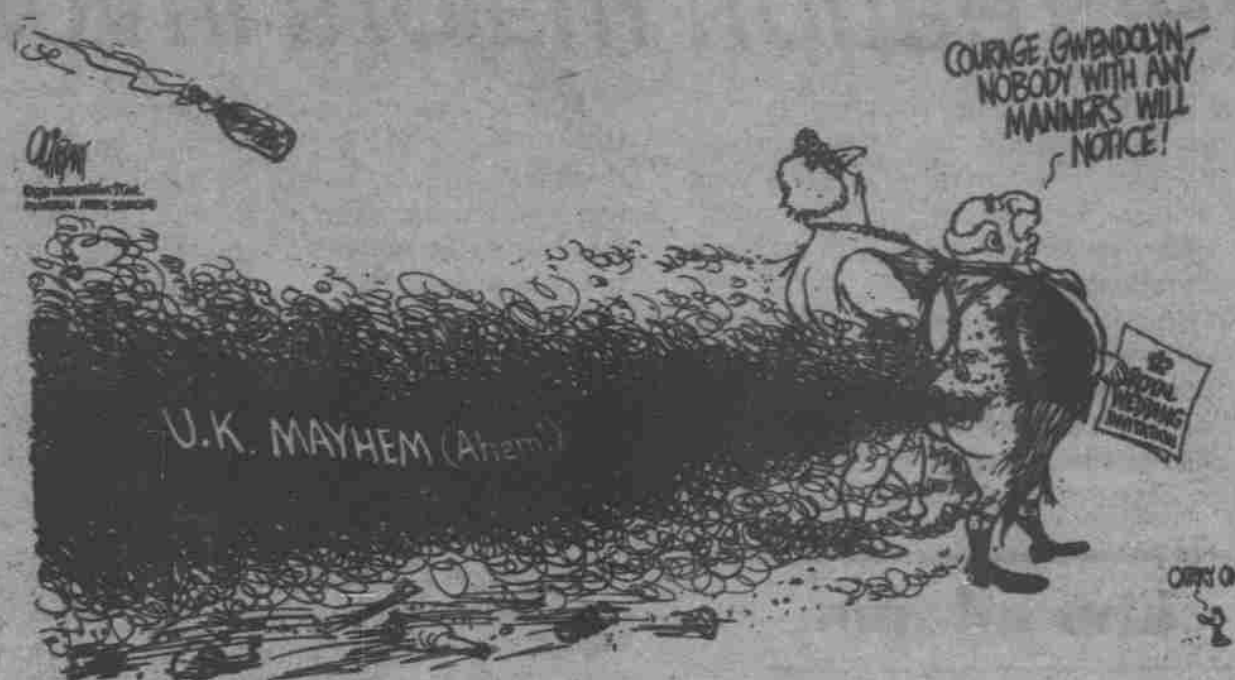
Back in 1903 when Wilbur and Orville Wright made the world's first flight in a power-driven aircraft, very few people took them seriously. Very few people even heard about the flight. Only three or four newspapers reported the event the next day and what they reported was inaccurate.

When the world's first sun-powered craft made its trek from near-Paris to Canterbury, England, recently, that flight was met with almost as little fanfare. In a world where high powered jets are everyday occurrences, many people easily miss the point of the Solar Challenger's flight, which reached a top speed of only 43 m.p.h. The importance of the Challenger's flight is not that it is a major breakthrough in world transportation but, as inventor Paul MacCready pointed out, that it showed "just how much solar power can do."

The possibilities as well as the benefits of solar power are endless. Sun power has already been used to heat buildings, power dams and now carry a 28-year-old man 180 miles through the air. With research, solar energy could eventually carry much of the burden that now rests on sources such as oil. That solar power is readily available and, practically speaking, indispensable is undoubtedly its greatest benefit. During the lifetime of mankind, we would not run out of sun and no nation could possibly build a monopoly on the sun.

No one denies that we must explore new areas to meet growing energy needs. Considering the benefits of solar power in combination with the disadvantages of other sources such as the limited supply of oil and the dangers and uncertainties of nuclear power, the most obvious choice for exploration would be in the area of the sun's resources. Recognizing this, last year the Department of Energy set a goal to provide 10 percent to 15 percent of the nation's electricity from solar energy by the year 2000.

But, because the price of developing solar energy remains exorbitant and the government places little emphasis on its advancement, that goal seems unlikely. It will take much more than casual consideration before we can take full advantage of our most available resource. Unfortunately, for now, the Solar Challenger is only a reminder of what can be done but its flight should be applauded. Perhaps it will supply the needed inspiration to drive full-force ahead toward the sun.



The Royal Wedding fills Yanks' colonial void

By KEITH KING

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We Americans might have done a lot of running around just a little over 200 years ago shouting about throwing off the reigns of royalty and declaring our independence, but still we're a bunch of closet monarchists.

My only wish is that the closet had a bed. It's tough on us over here in the colonies having to get up at the crack of dawn to see the royal hitch of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer live. About half of the *Tar Heel* staff was half-dead yesterday morning, having risen early for a Royal Wedding breakfast (we're still not speaking to the other half who turned off their alarm clocks and didn't show up) and to watch the couple take their vows. With the miracle of television we all have surely achieved a modern wonder: vicarious jetlag.

Why are we Yanks so infatuated with a declining kingdom whose major stars owe their positions to the luck of birth? We have a void which only England fills. We need a king or queen, someone to look up to that shines in the grace of God. How can one possibly look up to somebody one elects? George Washington should have done us all a favor and taken up the offer of some of our founding fathers to make him king. Or, better yet, we could have stayed with the mother country.

This Royal Wedding, more specifically, helped brighten an otherwise drab summer. It was hard celebrating the 205th year of independence, it just doesn't have that bicentennial ring. And the all-star baseball game was canceled over labor disputes (will that colonial rabble never settle down?).

But we Americans have nothing of which to be ashamed in our admiration for the royal couple and the royal festival. Or at least we can spread the royal guilt around some: estimates said that one of every five people on earth witnessed the wedding. Invitations to attend the ceremony in St. Paul's Cathedral in London were sent out to 2,500 heads of state, dignitaries, Royal Family and Royal Friends. About another million watched

along the Strand where the Royal Procession traveled to the church and then back to Buckingham Palace. Another 750 million commoners watched on TV.

The wedding was too long (one hour, ten minutes) — like those I attended as a child. But the view and the sound was better than I had been used to. I clearly saw and heard Lady Diana rearrange the order of her Prince's names. "I, Diana Frances, take thee, Philip Charles Arthur George (Charles is his first name) to be my wedded husband..."

The royal family looked nervous, just like all the commoners that have taken part in similar ceremonies, afraid someone might not hold his peace or Prince Andrew might have forgotten the Royal Ring. Queen Elizabeth was her usual solemn self; her husband, Prince Philip, and the Queen Mother appeared relatively at ease. But the new daughter-in-law seemed the happiest of the bunch, her wide smile clearly visible through her white veil.

(The pictures provided for us over here came from the BBC. They were not concerned with what Nancy Reagan wore, so all that speculation was for naught.)

Surely the interest and media coverage will continue throughout the Royal Honeymoon, as the Prince and Princess of Wales start their married life together. The biggest adjustment will probably be for the Princess, who must now wear hats in public, never address her husband in public by his Christian name and never arrive anywhere unannounced. Her friends will have to curtsy to her and address her as "ma'am." There are hundreds of other rules of protocol and royalty that might seem stifling to us republicans, but Royal Fortitude and Endurance will see her through.

The American fascination with this fairy tale will continue for years, undoubtedly. He will become King Charles III and she will be Queen Diana (actually, the Queen Consort).

This American can hardly wait for the royal coronation and, more importantly, the royal birth announcement.

Keith King, a senior journalism and English major from Rocky Mount, is rarely in royal form as arts and features editor for *The Tar Heel*.

Letters to the editor?

The Tar Heel welcomes letters to the editors and contributions of columns for the editorial page.

Such contributions should be typed, triple-spaced, on a 60-space line, and are subject to editing. Contributions must be submitted by 5 p.m. each Monday.