

BALD HEAD SUMMIT HELD

Rural Southern Economy Is A Clouded Picture

BY MAJORIE MEGIVERN

The fabled sunbelt of the south got its name from the recent dramatic growth in urban population and employment. Saturday, however, its rural areas were unmasked as cloudy spots on the nation's economy, with declines in both agriculture and manufacturing.

About 40 people were invited to Bald Head Island by Congressman Charlie Rose for an eight-hour conference on rural southern economic problems. Among them were economists, politicians and local government leaders, with Brunswick County represented by Ronnie Robinson, director of services for the aging. Lewis Dozier, a small farmer from Supply, John McMillan, representing Brunswick County Citizens Association, and Tom Rabon, former state representative.

Saturday's discussion focused on a report titled, "Shadows in the Sunbelt," written by a panel commissioned by MDC, a private, non-profit group. Former Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps, a member of the MDC panel, was the principal speaker.

This report uncovered some alarming trends in the rural south:

- Industrial recruiting is no longer the solution to a faltering economy, as some 10,000 industrial recruiters nationwide are competing for about 1,200 new plants a year.

- There is declining employment in traditional industries, such as textiles, due to foreign competition;

our workers make \$8 an hour, while third world workers are paid 20 cents, according to Kreps.

- The education gap between rural and urban areas is growing, as 27 percent of students drop out of school in North Carolina each year.

- Farmers face increased foreign competition; 13,000 farms in North Carolina went out of business from 1980-85.

- Rural counties lack money for water and sewer facilities, crucial to business expansion.

Rose said he set up the meeting to find solutions to these problems, not to blame anyone. "When I saw the MDC report, I thought it paralleled my experience in Congress. Agriculture is having a hard time right now, and so is production-type industry, especially textiles, because of tremendous imports coming in."

He pointed out the roots of foreign competition. "We stimulated productivity in the third world with our foreign aid, and now it will always compete with us. We did it to ourselves," he said.

Kreps, asked about the feasibility of curtailing foreign competition, suggested, "There should be some kind of quotas on automobile and textile imports, but we have to have a balanced trade. We have to be able to sell more abroad if we're to continue importing heavily."

Besides protection, another answer is education. Rose said, "Those communities doing the best are the ones paying attention to education."

He added that other answers are "technology transfer," getting new processes from the research labs and college campuses into the hands of local entrepreneurs, and "capital formation," finding money to help small business. "Since the federal government backed out, state and local government must get involved in making loans to small businessmen," he said.

Dozier, who works at Carolina Power and Light, said the information presented at Bald Head "was shocking. I did not realize some of these things were trends."

He said, "I gathered that we'll have to look at our own resources and brainstorm as a county what we can do for ourselves. We can no longer depend on what other people can do for us."

He went on, "Recruiting industry is not as effective as in the past. Also, it comes in and uses our cheap labor and the real benefits go to outsiders. Even the county does that."

Dozier said the county's resources development department could be good leaders in finding some answers for Brunswick County, but "they need to network with other groups, such as farmers...our local farm bureau should have the pulse of the county. And the Agriculture Extension Service and ASCS should help."

Farming corn and soy beans since 1975, Dozier has seen the cycle of success and failure "flatten out at the

bottom of the cycle" in the last ten years. "A combination of natural disasters, low prices and high production costs, has caused this," he said. "Mrs. Kreps said we must produce more per acre to compete in the world market."

Dozier also said he agreed with the sunbelt report that education is the key to solutions. "Our literacy rate will have to increase."

Robinson saw the issues raised as "very critical," and said he believes water and sewer systems to be the biggest problems in Brunswick County. "We can't attract industry without them," he said.

"We don't have a big fishery here, either," he continued. "There are lots of fishermen here, but we have to ship our fish up north for processing. A processing plant would mean more jobs for county people."

Robinson suggested that businesses come together through the Council of Governments and pool money to loan small businesses. "Our business people here don't look long-term," he noted.

As a director of aging services, he saw an economic opportunity in that segment of the population. "We have a crisis in housing for the elderly," he said. "If realtors looked at a long-term investment to help with this problem, it would be one solution for our economy."

He pointed out, however, "Most of the people who start new businesses here are people moving in from someplace else."

Calabash Hires New Attorney

BY MAJORIE MEGIVERN

The town of Calabash has a new attorney, following a vote Monday to hire Michael Ramos of the Ramos and Lewis firm in Shalotte.

The town board discussed at previous meetings the need for an attorney closer to Calabash than Mike Isenberg of Southport, who has been representing the town.

Commissioner Pati Lewellyn said in Monday's meeting, "Mike Ramos called and said he'd seen in the paper that we were going to ask him if he'd work on an hourly basis, and he said he would."

The question was raised as to who would do delinquent tax collection, and commissioners agreed to wait and ask Ramos if he wanted to do it. Town Clerk Janet Thomas reminded

them, "Isenberg said it might be a good idea to get someone familiar with tax law."

Town Hall plans, drawn by Lewellyn, were discussed, with attention given to exterior construction materials. Mayor Doug Simmons said he preferred brick, but Commissioner Robert Weber pointed out cinder block is cheaper, and a metal building would be the cheapest of all. Lewellyn said, "Brick would cost about \$800 more than wood, and it's nice, but that's \$800 we could put into file cabinets or furniture."

Simmons agreed to get the final plans drawn, after which Lewellyn will draw up specifications, and bids can then be solicited. "Maybe we can have a groundbreaking by November," Simmons said.

Thomas reported the town's plan-

ing board can't get help with a town re-zoning project from the state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, because Calabash has no land use plan. "Zoning is based on a land use plan," she said, "and we've never done one."

She said applications for grant money to develop a land use plan must be in by February.

The board agreed to invite NRC representatives to the October meeting to advise them on procedure.

Following a suggestion from Lewellyn, the board voted to discontinue one of its semi-monthly meetings. It will meet only on the second Monday of each month, with the next meeting scheduled Oct. 13.

Rabies Clinic Will To Held

The next rabies clinic planned by the Brunswick County Health Department will be held from 9 a.m. till noon Sept. 13 at the Brunswick Animal Hospital on Hwy. 17 in Supply. The Cape Fear Animal Hospital on Highways 133-87 in Southport, and Calabash Animal Hospital next to Calabash Traders Village.

Registration Day Planned

Shingletree precinct will hold a voter registration day from 11:30 a.m. till 1 p.m. Sept. 20.

William Grumley, chairman of the event, said, "This will be about the last chance to register before the Nov. 4 elections."

Call Grumley or Bud Knapp for more information.

Balloon Release Will Launch Girl Scout Registration Drive

Girls Scouting's educational, but it's also fun.

That's the message local Girl Scouts will be conveying during their "Great Balloon Escape," on Saturday, Sept. 13, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia.

An afternoon of entertainment, refreshments, door prizes and a mass balloon release by local Girl Scouts is planned in conjunction with a countywide registration drive for

girls interested in joining a Scouting program.

Programs are available for girls ages 5 through 18, according to spokesman Jeannie Harmon: Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes and Seniors.

Balloons released by the scouts will each contain an activity idea submitted by a Girl Scout—from time travel to a service project, and a return name and address for contact by the person who finds the balloon.

Harrelson To Hold Rally

Tommy Harrelson, Republican candidate for Congress, will hold a Brunswick County kickoff rally Monday at 7:30 p.m. at Sim's Barbecue outside Shalotte. The public is in-

ited. Harrelson seeks to unseat incumbent Seventh District Congressman Charlie Rose.

Animal Control Needs \$30,000 In Improvements

BY TERRY POPE

Upgrading the county's animal control program could cost more than \$30,000, the Brunswick County Board of Health learned Monday night.

According to a state health official's recommendations, the animal control program's "most pressing need is in the area of additional personnel."

In another personnel matter Monday, the board met in executive session for 40 minutes to discuss the hiring of a permanent health director. The board had met twice previously to review applications. They took no action Monday.

Board members did ask Acting Director John Crowder and Animal Control Supervisor Zelma Babson to prepare a list, in order of priority, of the animal program's needs as outlined by the state. The list will later be presented to county commissioners along with a request for funding.

In June, at the commissioners' request, Dr. John Freeman, head of the Environmental Epidemiology Branch of the N.C. Division of Health Services, inspected the animal shelter in Supply to determine what the program's needs are.

Crowder told the health board Monday that Freeman's recommenda-

tions could cost more than \$30,000. According to the report, the program's needs are as follows: a new carbon monoxide chamber, \$3,200; concrete walk from shelter to office, \$400; full-time secretary, \$13,000; full-time shelter attendant, \$13,000; and employee training courses, \$800.

A top priority should be funding of the euthanasia chamber, said board member Bill Rabon, a veterinarian. If commissioners decide against funding the \$3,200 chamber now, "then we should go to the public and ask for it," he added.

"I realize we can't go to the commissioners and ask for \$30,000 at this point in the year because we're not going to get it," Rabon said.

Board member Frankie Rabon, also a county commissioner, added, "It's just my personal opinion that we need to try to continue with what we've got until the next budget."

Ms. Babson told the board she was with Freeman when he inspected the animal control facility in June.

"He was kind of upset with the state of disrepair the chamber is in," Ms. Babson said.

The employee turnover rate and the amount of overtime also note problems in personnel, Freeman's letter indicated.

"First, the salaries are too low to retain an employee," wrote

Freeman. "And secondly, the program appears to be understaffed. Inadequate or improperly trained employees tend to increase the time required for each task."

Overall, Freeman said the program "appears to be functional and working. It appears to be meeting the needs of the county. There are no major program discrepancies and no major changes indicated."

In other action Monday, the board tabled a decision on whether to continue offering sewage system inspections for no fee to residents or to companies that are selling or refinancing homes.

Banks are starting to require the inspections to determine if wells and septic systems are functioning properly before closing a sale. Crowder said. However, the health department has no fee for the service.

The department has made 291 inspections since Jan. 30, he added. It is averaging 40 septic system inspections a month, or two to three a day.

"It wouldn't hurt my feelings to drop it," Crowder said of the program. Private companies can also provide the inspections, he said.

"Our sanitarians are already over-taxed," said board member Bill Rabon. "It's just another job for them to do for no more money."

However, board member Pearly Vereen said it was a service the department should "provide to anyone, real estate agents or individuals." Vereen recommended asking commissioners to establish a fee for the service.

"And if the department can't do the job, then hire more sanitarians," he added.

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