

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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An Offer The Congressman Wouldn't Dare To Refuse?

The peanut deal wasn't enough to make Congressman Charlie Rose vote for the North American Free Trade Agreement. But something else obviously was.

In a peculiar about-face which took place sometime between last Monday and Wednesday, Rose changed his mind about NAFTA and did President Clinton's bidding to help the agreement win approval in the U.S. House.

If Rose's change of heart had anything in common with that of other NAFTA opponents-turned-supporters, there was a *quid pro quo* involved; so far, he's not saying.

According to news stories last Tuesday, Rose was unimpressed with the carrot the president had dangled that day. Clinton had promised Rose and other peanut-state legislators to ask the International Trade Commission to investigate whether the flood of processed peanuts coming into the U.S. through Canada is hurting American peanut price-supports. Rose reportedly called the offer "a joke."

Apparently, the president was ultimately able to come up with an offer that made Rose stop laughing and see the light. Maybe it was something like one of these deals made with his colleagues:

■ The vote of J.J. Pickle, D-Texas, was worth \$10 million worth of taxpayers' money. The deal was authorization in NAFTA legislation to build the J.J. Pickle Trade Study Center, presumably in Texas.

■ Another Texas legislator, Rep. Gene Green, was promised a \$10 million East Houston bridge by Transportation Secretary Federico Pena.

■ A yes from Reps. Porter Goss, Dan Miller, Tom Lewis and Henry Johnston, all of Florida, was worth \$16 million. The administration will fund an agricultural research center to protect Florida growers and allow pesticide use.

■ Four California Democrats had written into NAFTA legislation funding for the North American Development Bank through a U.S.-Mexico executive agreement. The cost would be \$250 million; \$1.3 billion would be made available.

Those are a few of the more extravagant examples of the kind of dealing more closely associated with the world's oldest profession than the business of public service. After all, it's only money...

Maybe there are some really choice goodies for the people of the 7th District in the surprise package Rose got for changing his mind. It'll have to be mighty good to compensate for the queasy feeling voters get with such a flagrant reminder of how strange and smelly American politics can be.

Thank Your Humble Turkey

If you're having trouble finding things to be thankful for as you sit down to your turkey, say a word of thanks for the humble bird itself and its economic contribution to the Tar Heel State.

We're the country's largest turkey-producing state, with 800 North Carolina farm families raising more than 60 million birds this year.

Turkey consumption has continued to rise steadily to a current figure of approximately 18 pounds per person this year, with turkey food products available year-round in a variety of forms from sausage to deli meats.

Consider these facts from the N.C. Department of Agriculture about North Carolina's turkey industry:

■ Number of pounds produced annually (live weight): 1,321,000,000

■ On-farm value of production (1992 estimated): \$475 million

■ Number of hatching eggs produced: 80 million

■ Number of day-old pouls hatched: 60 million

■ People directly employed in industry: 9,000

■ People employed indirectly by the industry: 6,000

■ Bushels of soybeans consumed by turkeys: 27 million

■ Number of turkey hatcheries: 10

■ Number of feed mills: 13

■ Number of turkey processing plants: 6

All that considered, is it really fair that bad movies and troublesome people get referred to as turkeys? Not in North Carolina.

Thanks and bon appetit!

Worth Repeating...

*The clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober coloring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.*

—William Wordsworth

*For adoration all the ranks
 Of angels yield eternal thanks,
 And David in the midst.*

—Christopher Smart

*'Twas founded be th' Puritans to give thanks f'r bein'
 presarved fr'm th' Indians, an'...we keep it to give thanks we
 are presarved fr'm th' Puritans.*

—Finley Peter Dunne (Mr. Dooley)

"Thanksgiving"

Science Fiction? We're Living It With NEXRAD

Rising out of the landscape and above the trees, it towers darkly 10 to 15 stories above Shallotte, a distinctive landmark with no signs of life around its base.

On its top, a huge dome constantly scanning the Earth's atmosphere...

Can you imagine Shallotte as the setting for a new work of "hard" science fiction, of the same ilk as Jules Verne or Isaac Asimov?

Close your eyes and try again, because tomorrow is here.

Within a year that tower, that landmark, will be part of the Shallotte horizon, its dome larger than that of conventional radar.

It will be the most visible symbol we have locally of the times in which we are living—an era of such rapid advances in technology that we can scarcely imagine their scope, much less keep up. As far back in the "boonies" as we sometimes consider ourselves, even here we can't escape the increasingly rapid pace of change. I doubt we'd want to if we could. It's all too exciting.

The tower will be a NEXRAD radar antenna, one of many scattered across the country. It will operate on



Susan Usher

remote, its datastream feeding by cable into computers at an expanded National Weather Service office at New Hanover International Airport, Wilmington. New software programs will allow rapid analysis of data by a bank of meteorologists, and rapid relay of that information to interested parties.

Local residents have known for some time a NEXRAD site would be built here, off N.C. 130 just west of Shallotte, but I don't think many people had any idea of its size, shape or complexity.

Why build it here instead of at the NWS office? Al Hinn, meteorologist-in-charge says the antennae were sited based on the composite

needs of the agencies that will share the data collected. These include the Department of Defense, Weather Service, Federal Aviation Administration and others.

By itself NEXRAD would be awesome, but it is even more so in tandem with other changes being phased in to take the Weather Service into the 21st century.

A new improved remote weather observation system will greatly enhance short-range condition reporting. Using a computer, presently the NWS can retrieve wind and temperature data from remote observation stations like the one at Holden Beach on a regular schedule, and weather balloons take readings at the airport every 12 hours.

These new systems will do much, much more, and a lot faster. We're talking five-minute intervals for information feeds.

"There are many times," says Hinn, "when the weather situation is changing very rapidly and people need to know that—air traffic controllers and aviation types, for example."

Another system, called "Profiles,"

is a vertical scanning radar device.

What all the new technology comes down to, says Hinn, is a chance for meteorologists to not only look at more data, but to look at it in new ways, exploring relationships in ways not possible before. Conditions can be pinpointed for very specific geographic areas, a county or a city, for example.

Already, NEXRAD installations are relaying information gleaned from their system to NWS sites still without the technology, an informal "heads up" warning system.

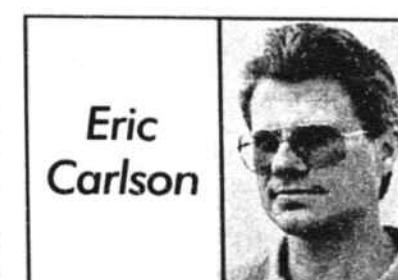
The technology will allow the Wilmington staff to become regional specialists on coastal and offshore weather—understanding better and responding accordingly.

Hinn likens the changes to other major advances in meteorology—such as the introduction of radar and satellite in the late 50s and early 60s. "It means we'll be understanding better not only what's going on, but understanding the science of it better as well," he said. "It's a very exciting, special time for us, this decade."

That goes for all of us, Al.



Be Thankful For That Thin Blue Line



Eric Carlson

Listening to ten narcotics officers in black fatigues planning a drug raid offered all the makings for an exciting evening. Lots of speeding cars, blue lights, sirens and suspects up against the wall. Great stuff for pictures. Way better than a commissioners' meeting.

The detective at the blackboard concluded his remarks by listing some of the weapons known to be carried by those named in the stack of sealed indictments.

"I want everyone wearing a vest," he said. "Him, too."

He was pointing at me. Which definitely got my attention.

The new Kevlar flak jacket was comfortable, if not comforting. They told me it would offer some protection against handguns. But it wouldn't stop a bullet from the AK-47, the SKS-56 the MAC-90 or some of the other weapons currently in vogue among players and wannabes in the drug trade.

The vast majority of Brunswick Countians live in nice, peaceful, often stunningly beautiful surroundings. Which is one of the reasons the natives stay put and the rest of us migrated here.

We look around and see beaches and marshes and rivers and farm fields and pine forests and oceanfront bungalows and golf course developments and wooded subdivisions and tidy mobile home communities.

Most of us don't see crack houses and open-air drug markets and armed thugs and people so hopelessly broken by substance abuse they no longer care about themselves or their family or their future; people whose sole ambition is to find more drugs.

We think of "those people" as characters on our TV screens: the "bad boys" in real-life cop shows, the human scenery in gritty urban dramas, the handcuffed suspects escorted down courthouse hallways on the evening news.

Guess what? Some of "those people" live right here in your county.

Maybe not in your neighborhood. But just up the road a piece.

If you make a wrong turn some

evening, you might drive past a broken-down, graffiti covered building where a dozen hollow-eyed souls are gathered around an oil-drum trash fire, shuffling from foot to foot, sipping from a brown paper sack and passing a smoking pipe.

Ride up another road at night and you're likely to see a flashlight flickering on and off from the darkness; a signal that there is crack cocaine for sale.

If you stop, you might also purchase bootleg liquor, or an illegal lottery ticket or some female companionship. Or you might get robbed at gunpoint for flashing too much cash.

Fortunately, these are small pockets of social decay that most of "us," the law-abiding majority, can easily avoid and ignore. We can live and work and play and raise our children without coming into any serious contact with "them," the criminals.

Because between "us" and "them" is what someone once called the "thin blue line" of law enforcement.

We'd like to think of our county sheriff's department in a "Mayberry RFD" sort of way, with a squad of Andy Taylors and Barney Fife settling arguments at Floyd's barber shop and helping Aunt Bee win the annual pickle contest.

But it's not like that anymore. Our deputies, detectives and town police officers face the same dangers, brought on by the same social problems, as their big-city cousins (though thankfully on a smaller scale).

If you ever glance at the crime report, you'll see how many break-ins and larcenies our deputies investigate every week. A large percentage of those stolen televisions, videocassette recorders and microwave ovens

are sold to buy drugs. Listen to a police scanner some night and you are sure to hear a few "10-82s" (domestic disputes), a "10-84" (suspect with a gun) and maybe a "10-96" (shots fired). Imagine being the one who has to pull into that driveway and knock on that door.

Riding along with the sheriff's drug squad last week, seeing all their SWAT-team outfits and "bullet-proof" vests and assault rifles, I wondered at first if these guys might have been watching a little too much TV themselves. Surely this was overkill, I thought.

Then I saw the scene at "the shed," Longwood's 24-hour drug mart. And on Turkey Trap Road, where investigators once retrieved nearly a hundred spent shell casings after a late-night shoot out. And in Phoenix, where detectives showed me two crack houses and the site of an illicit gambling operation.

At one of the raids, in the back seat of a car, the officers found an assault rifle capable of firing 50 rounds of .308-caliber ammunition without re-loading. The weapons carried by police only hold 25 rounds of .223-caliber bullets.

One after another, the local residents—people like "us" who have to pass these places day after day—happily surrendered their identification and told the officers how much they appreciated their effort; how much they hoped to see drug raids and checkpoints in their neighborhoods again.

It made me glad I don't live in an area like that. And thankful for that thin blue line.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

National Guard Unit's Service Is Impressive To Smith Family

To the editor:

On Nov. 14, we attended the funeral of our beloved Marvin Smith. At the funeral, the Shallotte National Guard conducted the military portion of the service.

In our grief we did not sufficiently thank the unit for their splendid performance. Collectively family members have witnessed a number of military funerals, but all said

none matched the execution of this unit. Their uniforms were sharp, their movements precise, and their demeanor militaristic.

We want to thank these men and commend them again for the excellent service. We are proud of them and thankful that they are our neighbors.

Family of Marvin Smith
 Edward Wagner

Write Us

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters must include your address and telephone number. (This information is for verification purposes only; we will not publish your street/mailing address or phone number.) Letters must be typed or written legibly. Address letters to:

The Brunswick Beacon, P.O. Box 2558, Shallotte NC 28459
 Anonymous letters will not be published.