



SON OF A GUN

by Joe Lanier

Duplin County's Board of Commissioners attempted to set up some type of vehicle control policy a few years back. However, fear of losing a few votes, I suppose, caused them to change their minds. What little they did do has since been abandoned and their ability to control these vehicles was laughed at. They are so weak they even allow retired county workers to drive taxpayer-owned and kept-up vehicles. County-owned vehicles, for the most part, are used as the driver so desires. Usually the justification is "I am paid so little I deserve the use of their county vehicle for personal things." Fact of the matter is that there are at least 50 people wanting that job and would, in many cases, take it at \$2,000 less than is now being paid. Though I hate to do so, I must include the Sheriff's Department vehicles in this as there are some who willfully abuse their privilege of vehicle use. . . This, I question if the taxpayers must put up with the bad to get the good. . . It is good to have Sheriff's Department personnel in local neighborhoods with a marked vehicle parked for all to see in the deputy's front yard. But, is it good enough to allow the deputy to do as he sees fit with the vehicle. . . Are the commissioners asking the taxpayers to allow these cars to be used for personal use — to haul tobacco hands — the haul personal groceries — to speed up and down the highway above the posted limit — to haul friends around — to abuse parking laws. . . Is the good which the taxpayers get enough to put up with the bad forced on them by a few. Don't get me wrong. All folks driving county-owned vehicles do not abuse them. . . Most certainly, most of the deputies do what they are hired to do — protect the public and enforce the law. They do not abuse their privilege. . . But, here again, the few who do are going to force those who don't into paying. In the present Internal Revenue Service (the income tax people in Washington) packet, they are saying people who use company-owned vehicles should pay for the privilege of driving them to and from work. They have set a fee of \$4 a day, saying it is worth \$20 a week to be able to drive a vehicle home and to work. This includes county governments. . . You may recall a few years back, the state government began charging those employees who drive vehicles home a set fee per month. Now the federal government's big and forceful hand that slaps everyone over backwards, is swinging. New directives out on vehicle record-keeping, it appears, will cause a pole of paperwork to accumulate that will match the Grand Coulee Dam. As folks are seeing the trouble it will cause, some of the things set out in the beginning are being changed. Perhaps this item will also be changed. It surely needs to be. County governments need to control their own. Federal governments need to control their own. . . If the Feds are in control, why have county governments? . . . Although policies may now allow abuse in county-owned vehicles, we on a local level can change it with our votes when we tire of it. With the Feds in control, we will never be able to change anything. It takes too big a group to change federal policy. No single county, or state, for that matter, could force a change in federal policy. The bureaucracy is too big. . . Also, things tend to get misinterpreted. I think President Reagan has misinterpreted his re-election. If he allows his budget to continue as presented, I think he can kiss the White House goodbye the next time around. The things that help local folks are being cut from this budget. I believe in a strong defense. I believe that is all the Russians understand — force. . . I don't believe it takes a budget as big as Wineberg is forcing on us all. . . But, back to this vehicle thing. Let's move from the county to private business. Say IBM, for example, was allowing their people to drive their autos home. Now the Feds say these people have to pay \$20 a week for the privilege. . . So, what does IBM do? They add \$20 a week to the employee's paycheck. . . Now IBM adds that \$20 to the equipment they sell. When you buy the equipment, you pay \$20 more. . . So, who is paying this new tax? . . . The same person that pays everything. . . You, the consumer. . . Son-o-f-a-Gun. . .

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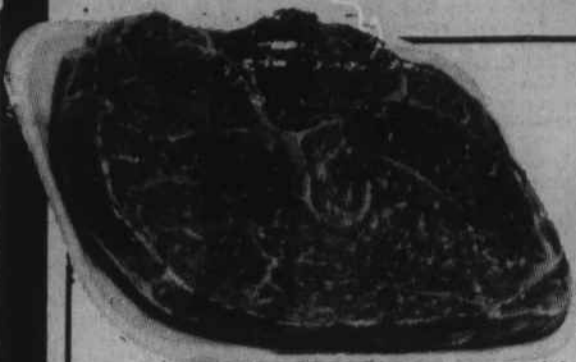
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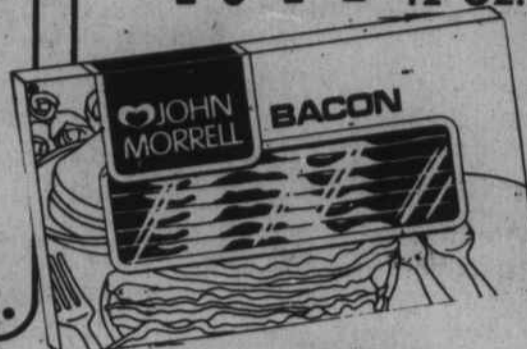
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