

Calabash Can't Waste Opportunity

Doug Rutter



Newspaper people are often quick to criticize elected officials for their lack of leadership. We've had ample opportunity to do that this year in Brunswick County when referring to the county commissioners and school board. But it's not very often that we columnists take the opportunity to praise the efforts of community leaders like the crew working in Calabash.

This volunteer group has pushed for change and has met with some resistance. But through these small squabbles, Calabash's leaders are keeping the dream alive.

Town residents indicated in a recent survey that they want to live in a retirement, golf and fishing com-

munity. This is obviously what town officials want as well, and it doesn't look like they're going to quit until they get it.

Calabash residents should give their leaders a pat on the back. There's a new, healthy attitude in Calabash that can produce nothing but positive results for the town and its people.

The Calabash Planning and Zoning Board and its various committees have played a key role in working toward improvement of the community. They started going full steam ahead earlier this year and haven't looked back.

The board members may have had trouble understanding the limits of their role in local government

at first, but you can't say a bad word about their enthusiasm or willingness to put in the hours.

They're addressing all of the town's needs—including solid waste and recycling, transportation and dredging of the Calabash River.

These volunteers also are working toward some things the town may not need, but things that would make it a better place to live and work. Town beautification comes to mind.

With all of this going on, the most important project under way in Calabash may be the effort to get sewer service to the business district and waterfront.

The absence of sewer service in the downtown area is certainly related to pollution problems in the

Calabash River, where bacteria levels at times are unsafe for fishing and swimming.

It's ironic that all of those beautiful shrimp boats and fishing vessels are docked in a river that is ecologically on death's door. But that's exactly what has happened as Calabash has developed with restaurants, businesses and residences and no adequate method of handling the waste.

Calabash has been given an opportunity to hook its downtown business area on to a sewer system operated by a private utility.

The cost would be staggering. It would cost several hundred thousand dollars to expand sewer service to the downtown area.

But the cost of not providing sewer service to the waterfront would be even higher. What would Calabash be like 20 years from now if pollution gets worse and the smell and appearance of the river drives visitors away?

A sewer system serving the waterfront would hike property values and tax base for the town. It might even urge landowners paying these higher taxes to take more pride in the appearance of Calabash.

Town officials have the football in their hands. They need to grab it with both hands and make sure they don't fumble it.

Letting that available sewer service slip away—for any reason—would be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Opinion Page

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1990

Seek Common Ground, Don't Dwell On Differences

It's easy to understand why black Democratic Party leaders were disappointed with the outcome of the Nov. 6 general elections, in which the two local black candidates failed to win.

But their plan to seek two black majority electoral districts is way off course. Here they are trying to set the black community apart as "different," claiming that one segment of the population deserves special treatment and a voice greater than that given the average citizen. That will only lead to more factionalism, not less.

Their cause would be better served by trying to find out what black citizens have in common with other Brunswick County voters and building new coalitions around those broader issues and concerns. Most of us are after the same things: a better quality of life for ourselves and our children in terms of housing, job and educational opportunities, the best return on our tax dollars we can get, and fair and equitable treatment.

With the existing electoral district system, every resident of the county has a commissioner and a school board member whose job it is to represent their interests and concerns, regardless of their race, color, sexual preference, church affiliation, political party affiliation or whatever.

But the decisions they make affect everybody in the county and, as it should be, each of those commissioners and school board members must eventually answer to every voter in the county.

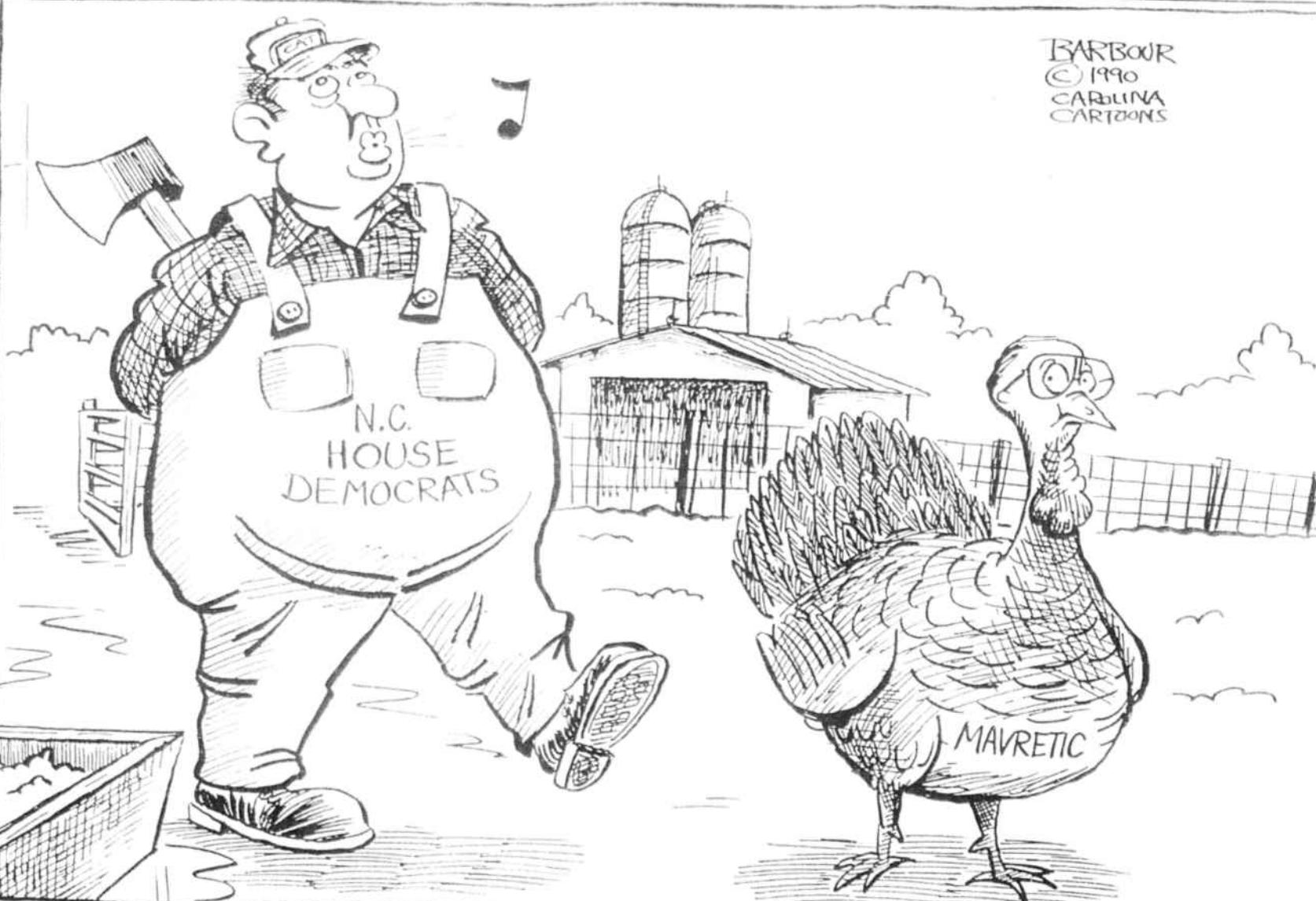
Most of the county's roughly 4,500 black voters are registered as Democrats. In the general elections, a large number exercised their right to vote. With the urging and sometimes the assistance of black party leaders, many voted straight Democratic tickets.

A lot of white voters registered as Democrats did not vote straight tickets, which led leaders in the black community to feel betrayed. They had done their part, but the system had failed: "If you're good to the party, the party will be good to you." Or at least that's the way it was supposed to work.

But times have changed, and we think for the better. The typical voter isn't as concerned today with a candidate's party affiliation as with what he or she represents. Many voters would fit into one "special interest group" or another and that's fine. That shouldn't make them eligible for their own electoral district. To be real winners, we have to work together for the entire county.

Black, white, Democrat, Republican, farmers, senior citizens, from one end of the county or another—all of us want our votes to not only count, but to carry the maximum weight. But voting is a privilege of citizenship, however flawed the system may be. It comes with no guarantees that the candidate or the party of our choice will gain election, or that if they do, they'll see fit to send favors our way or to share our special interests.

But voting, even more than paying taxes, should buy us access to the system—the right to ask for county water, to express concerns about one issue or another, to try to make things different or better—even when "our" party isn't in office.



BARBOUR
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 CAROLINA
 CARTOONS

Bringing Lunch? Better Pack Your Own Milk, Too

It was one of those things you don't quite believe the first time you hear it.

A student who brings his or her lunch from home can't buy a carton of milk from the high school cafeteria to go with it. Or an apple, by golly. Those privileges are reserved for students who buy plate lunches from the school system. So says the child nutrition director for the Brunswick County Schools. I heard it myself.

Nolan Galloway of Supply brought this little operating rule to the attention of school board members at their Nov. 13 meeting. He knows about it because he has a daughter who attends West Brunswick High School and brings her own lunches from home.

He can't understand why she can't buy a carton of milk to go with lunch. Neither can I, though I can appreciate the Catch-22 situation that led to such a ridiculous rule.

The child nutrition department has been under the gun the past several years to improve its bottom line. Labor costs were too high in proportion to overall meal costs and not enough students were eating lunch and/or breakfast in the cafeterias. Some cafeterias were losing money.

Along with serving healthier meals (less fat, sugar, salt, etc.) the cafeterias have been trying to cut labor and food costs and beef up student participation. They're involving students in developing menus, offering taste-ins of new foods, offering more food choices and in general trying to make cafeterias more appealing.

For the most part they're succeeding, I think. The meals I've eat-



Susan Usher

en at schools have been pretty good—and a great bargain, price-wise. But you know how kids are. Most aren't looking for a Type A lunch that is good for them. And when you're feeding that many people on a tight budget, it's not like they're dining at the Waldorf-Astoria or even Morrison's.

The department relies heavily on the federal government to operate cost effectively. Reimbursements for free and reduced meals are the main revenue source, and Ms. Johnson they're available only for plate lunches.

That's how the no-milk rule came

about, you see. If you let one student buy just milk or an apple or chips, then how can you not let all students buy them? And what if students who qualify for those all-important free or reduced lunches choose instead to buy an apple, a bag of chips and a carton of milk? Right now all the school cafeterias are in the black and the county wants to keep it that way.

Superintendent P.R. Hanks, who in his old post of assistant superintendent oversaw the food service program, told the Galloways that the milk rule would get a second look, maybe get experimented with a little. But he made no promise of permanent change.

Adults may not need milk, but growing kids do. And besides, they shouldn't be penalized when they are fortunate enough have parents who take the time to prepare lunches for them.

While sympathizing with the economics of the situation, I don't like the implied message of this no-milk

rule. I read it this way: If you don't buy a plate lunch from us, then you don't count with us.

Surely there's a better way to keep school cafeterias operating on a break-even basis than limiting sales of milk and fruit, or for that matter, chips.

The school system wants more parent involvement—maybe parents can come up with a solution to this one if the nutrition staff can't.

Write Us

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A Thanksgiving Letter From Calabash Couple

To the editor:
 On Thanksgiving Day in 1935 we drove through this area. It was oh, so quiet, then as we were returning from our honeymoon trip in Florida.

We explored this area and enjoyed the moss-covered trees, the huge water oaks and the friendly greetings we received along the quiet roads.

It was great and, after so many years passed by and we had travelled throughout this great country, we came here to Calabash to build our modest home, the fifth.

We are happy to be able to celebrate our 55th wedding anniversary Nov. 16, and at age 80 and 87, thankful to be together and in good health.

The Lord has been good to us, and our many friends and neighbors respectful and kind.

Loretta and Earl Markland
 Calabash



Rev. Everett's Battle Has Strong Message

Terry Pope



This Thanksgiving there are some families who are truly thankful because they are warm. They might not be able to afford big turkeys and vegetables again this year, but they are thankful just because they have a home that keeps out the cold.

An article in this week's *Brunswick Beacon* tells the story of a group of volunteers called Helping Hands Inc.

The volunteers' mission is to help families stricken by poverty improve their living conditions by volunteering their time, energy, money and supplies to help upgrade the poor housing conditions that are not a rare sight in Brunswick County.

The people who are the Helping Hands have a task that's too great

for a small group of volunteers to really ever finish. These people must work jobs to support families and to ensure that they are not the next victims to fall prey to poverty. They give up their weekends and nights to help their fellow man.

The Helping Hands didn't come to the media seeking publicity. That's not what it's all about. When I heard about the group, I went to them. The head of the non-profit organization, the Rev. Thurman Everett, convinced me that there is truly a Christian spirit which guides these volunteers to do what they feel they must do.

Poverty isn't the product of someone's imagination. When former President Ronald Reagan said there were no homeless people in America, he was living in the

White House. I have to admit, I was stunned by what I saw last week when Rev. Everett carried me to one of the projects the group is now working on so close to my own home. I have taken too much for granted.

Remember the old saying about how evil flourishes when good men do nothing? What motivates the Helping Hands is the thought that one good deed will multiply. A warm home will nurture a child's willingness to go to school and to learn. Running water will spark a single parent's desire to find a job, to build a higher self-esteem.

And then there is Luke 10 in the Holy Bible. Rev. Everett said it is this message that motivates the group to keep hammering away no matter how heavy the toll becomes

on their hearts. It is a message about stopping to help your neighbor.

In layman's language, I will try to interpret that message about the Good Samaritan.

In Luke, Jesus tells a lawyer that to inherit eternal life he must first love his neighbor, but the lawyer asks who those neighbors might be. Jesus then relates the story about a man from Jerusalem who was traveling to Jericho when he fell in with robbers who stripped him, beat him and went off leaving him for dead.

It just so happened that a priest was passing by, but when he saw the man lying there in such a state, the priest crossed to the other side of the road and continued on his way, refusing to become involved. A Levite also came upon the man, and he,

too, passed to the other side.

A Samaritan who happened to be passing saw the man and was moved to pity. He bandaged the wounds, bathed him in oil, lifted the man to his donkey and walked the rest of the way to an inn. He paid the bill at the inn and agreed to pay the innkeeper on his way back through town if more money was needed.

Jesus asks which of the three was a "neighbor"?

It's not a difficult question to answer.

Rev. Everett says if all men can stop just long enough to give a Helping Hand, then everyone will benefit. Just something to think about this Thanksgiving.

The address is Helping Hands Inc., P.O. Box 1104, Leland, N.C. 28451.