



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

July 19, 2016

That money talks, I'll not deny, I heard it once: It said, "Goodbye."
~ Richard Armour

Subsidy for Economic Enslavement

The State Ports Authority has just welcomed to Wilmington the *Hanjin Chongqing*, its third Asian container ship of a new, larger generation designed to take advantage of the new, larger locks in the Panama Canal. And majestic it was, 268 feet longer and 23 feet wider than the *USS North Carolina*. And designed to sit 11 feet deeper in the water.

We said that couldn't be done. The channel in the Cape Fear River was designed for ships 30 feet shorter and 30 feet narrower, drawing eight feet less water than the *Hanjin Chongqing*. But the Ports Authority, undaunted in its desire to participate in the far eastern trade, persuaded the Asian shipowners to give it a try, loading the ship well below its capacity to reduce the draft by nine feet. Then the pilots used the flood tide, and to get around the turn at Battery Island, the help of a tugboat.

We stood by the river at Southport watching this event, a major step forward in relationships with and economic ties to Asia. A glorious sight, the vessel's deck loaded with layer upon layer of great boxes full of furniture and tools and clothing and auto parts from Asia headed for our stores and homes. Just think, in an earlier day we had to make those things ourselves, in our own factories here in North Carolina. Now those workers who had to rise early each day to work in those factories have all that time available for leisure. And our communities that once had to endure the noise and bustle of industry have been restored to rural tranquility. We can return to the land, to the farms.

Of course we must pay for all those things in those boxes. In the first quarter of 2016, the United States sent \$117 billion to China in payments for purchases. The Chinese did buy some stuff from us--all those boxes are not going back empty. They used our dollars to buy \$26 billion in US goods in that quarter. But that leaves us with a trade deficit of \$91 billion for the quarter--on its way to \$360 billion for the year. That's \$360,000,000,000. And that does not include the \$70 million in North Carolina tax money provided by Senator Rabon and Representative Iler to the Ports Authority for new facilities for those ships. A lavish subsidy for Asian imports.

So what do the Chinese do with the dollars we send them? China is the largest foreign investor in US government securities, and now holds *\$1.24 trillion* in our debt. Chinese nationals are the largest foreign buyers of US property. They bought \$110 billion worth of our real estate in the last five years, some of that in Brunswick County. They also invest in securities of US companies, and buy entire enterprises, such as Smithfield Foods. They will soon own us. Perhaps they already do.

We soon must devote some space to Chinese recipes. We shall have to learn to feed our new bosses what they expect. Cantonese and Sichuan are tasty. And someday, perhaps, a Chinese language edition of the *Cape Fear Firebird*.