

MONMOUTH-OCEAN COUNTY, N.J.
RANKS NO. 3 MOST LIVABLE IN
UNITED STATES

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 12, 1997

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report that a leading national business publication has discovered what I have known all my life—that the Monmouth-Ocean County area of New Jersey is one of the best places to live in the United States.

I would also like to note that Middlesex County, also in my district, is part of a region which moved from 83d to 29th in the national ranking.

I grew up in Long Branch, NJ, a city in historic Monmouth County, where right at my doorstep were the Atlantic Ocean, beautiful rivers and even a few lakes. New York City, with all of its cultural attractions and employment possibilities, was a 1-hour drive away. Locally, a light industrial economic base combined with a thriving tourist season resulted in the creation of many jobs for area families.

Monmouth County scored high on the criteria ranked as important by the readers of Money magazine which conducted the survey. These criteria included a low crime rate, excellent health care, and a clean environment. The high scores in these areas don't just happen by accident—they are the result of a great deal of hard work by the citizens of central Jersey over a period of many years.

I would like to include for the RECORD an article which appeared in the Asbury Park Press today which describes the Monmouth-Ocean County area and why it has earned the designation as the third most livable place in the United States.

The article follows:

[From the Asbury Park Press, June 12, 1997]

HAPPY? WE SHORE ARE!

(By Dennis P. Carmody)

If you want to live someplace better than Monmouth and Ocean counties, better pack your parka and trudge on up to Nashua, N.H., or Rochester, Minn.

At least that is what Money magazine concluded in the publication's annual survey of the best places to live.

In the survey released yesterday, Monmouth and Ocean counties placed higher than ever before, coming in third behind first-place Nashua and second-place Rochester. It came in first among metropolitan areas with a million or more residents.

"We're just elated!" said Pat Padula, tourism representative for Monmouth County. "I think this will make a great impact."

"It's great news and an independent evaluation of why we're all proud to call this area home," said John C. Bartlett Jr., director of the Ocean County Board of Freeholders.

The region's ranking has proved very volatile in the 11 years since the magazine started the list. Just two years ago Monmouth and Ocean counties fell to 167th place; the region's lowest mark ever. Last year it jumped to 38th place.

"Magazine come out with lists because lists sell magazines," cautioned Jack Preston, president of the Monmouth County Association of Realtors. Still, this ranking will lead some folks to take a second look at the area.

"You can be in the countryside here and five minutes later you're at the ocean,"

Preston said. "Two minutes after that you can be by a river."

Sue Tauriello, president of the Ocean County Association of Realtors, said she planned to make copies of the story to hand out to all her agents at her Dover Township office.

She said the good news would help counter some of the bad national impressions the area has received of late, such as the cancer scare in Dover Township and the murder of Kathleen Stanfield Weinstein, a schoolteacher abducted from a Dover shopping center.

Each year the magazine asks a cross-section of readers to rank 41 different factors that affect a town's quality of life, such as health care, sunny weather and nearby professional sports, said Richard Eisenberg, executive editor for Money.

The magazine's editors then weigh the nation's 300 largest metropolitan areas against those preferences to come up with its list. Changes in reader preferences, economic booms and busts and new sources of data sometimes lead to dramatic shifts in rank, Eisenberg said.

For example, while a low crime rate was considered the most important attribute for the second year in a row, health care issues rose in prominence in this year's survey, Eisenberg said.

That helped Monmouth and Ocean counties, home to 10 major hospitals, Eisenberg said.

The counties' low crime rate, about 65 percent below the national average, also helped, according to the magazine. So did the beaches and parks.

Monmouth and Ocean counties benefited from a new way of ranking the arts. For the first time, the two counties were considered close enough to New York that they could bask in its cultural glory, Eisenberg said.

The two counties lagged in transportation. About 40 percent of residents here work outside the two counties, and their average commute of 27 minutes was seventh-highest on the list, the magazine reported.

Monmouth and Ocean counties were not alone in their improvements. The seven other metropolitan regions in New Jersey all rose in the ranks too.

Central New Jersey, which includes Middlesex, Somerset and Hunterdon counties, saw its placing improve from 83rd to 29th, the magazine reported. Bergen and Passaic counties jumped further than any other area of the list rising 158 slots from 228th to 70th.

Mercer County had the second-highest jump, rising 139 slots from 265th to 126th. Northwest New Jersey, comprised of Essex, Morris, Sussex, Union and Warren counties, rose from 240th place to 136th.

Cumberland County rose from 223rd place to 166th while Atlantic and Cape May counties rose from 268th to 199th. Rounding out the state was Hudson County, which improved from 290th to 220th.

Improvement in the state's economy is a factor, said James W. Hughes, dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

"In the past year the gap between New Jersey and the rest of the country in both the unemployment rate and job growth has really started to close," Hughes said.

In April, New Jersey's unemployment rate was 5.2 percent, just 0.3 percent higher than the national average, according to the state Labor Department.

Monmouth County's jobless rate was even lower at 4.3 percent, while Ocean's tied with the state at 5.2 percent, according to the department.

The magazine's top 10 places were dominated by New Hampshire and Florida. After

Monmouth and Ocean counties, Punta Gorda, Fla., came in fourth, followed by the New Hampshire towns of Portsmouth and Manchester.

Last year's list-topper, Madison, Wis., came in seventh this year, followed by the highest-ranked large city on the list, San Jose, Calif. Jacksonville and Fort Walton Beach, Fla., rounded out the top 10.

Davenport, Iowa, took last place in this year's survey because of its high crime rate and poor economy.

INFORMATION ON MOST-FAVORED-NATION STATUS

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 12, 1997

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the insight added to the policy debate on most-favored-nation [MFN] status for China by Rev. Robert A. Sirico in an article he authored in yesterday's Wall Street Journal. Reverend Sirico succinctly highlights the danger which occurs when "labor unions and other left-liberal protectionists" align themselves with those factions of the religious right who, at times, are "insensitive to the difference between urging certain moral ends and using government coercion to bring them about."

Reverend Sirico, a Paulist priest, explains that pleas from evangelical missionaries currently working in China have passionately urged United States policymakers not to cut off trade with China as this would endanger Christian's status in China as well as possibly lead to the Chinese Government revoking Christian's visas.

"Economic prosperity through free trade is the most effective distributor of wealth and power, and trade with China is the surest way to break the grip of centralized political power" according to Reverend Sirico who also finds the Chinese Government's treatment of Christians morally objectionable.

It is important, in evaluating United States policy toward the government of China, or any other sovereign foreign government, to differentiate between lowering trade barriers, as MFN status simply does, and United States taxpayer financing of foreign governments through various forms of foreign aid as well as engaging in corporate welfare through such agencies as the World Bank, OPIC, and the IMF. While lowering trade barriers necessarily results in greater economic well-being, foreign aid, and international corporate welfare programs are neither economically prudent nor constitutional. Additionally, misnamed multilateral agreements like NAFTA, or more honestly, government-regulated international trade does not constitute free trade and should be opposed on the same grounds of unconstitutionality and economical ineptness.

I commend the research of Reverend Sirico and thank him for his important contribution to the policy debate regarding most-favored-nation status and recommend a careful reading of his article by everyone genuinely interested in both the proper moral and economic resolution of this issue.

[From the Wall Street Journal, June 11, 1997]

CHINA AND THE TRADE WARRIORS

(By Robert A. Sirico)

Despite occasional tensions between social conservatives and economic conservatives,

most social and cultural goals have an economic dimension about which the two camps are generally in agreement. But now a leader of the socially conservative camp has proposed that there is an issue that pits morality and prosperity irreconcilably against one another—U.S. trade with China, a nation known for human-rights violations, and particularly for religious persecution.

Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council is demanding that the U.S. government wage economic war against China with sanctions, boycotts and embargoes. In his campaign for trade restrictions with China, Mr. Bauer and a few other conservative leaders are working hand in glove with labor unions and other left-liberal protectionists, normally diehard opponents of the religious right.

BARRICADES HAVE COLLAPSED

The usual political barricades have collapsed as Mr. Bauer's comrades join forces to oppose congressional attempts to continue normal trading relations with China. In a recent letter, Mr. Bauer compares the urgency of imposing sanctions to issues such as ending slavery and defeating Hitler.

How restricting trade with China will help strengthen American families, faith and morality is unclear. What is clear is that Mr. Bauer finds China's treatment of Christians morally objectionable. I do, too. And he is to be commended for his efforts at raising the public's awareness of Chinese persecution. Christians are threatened, jailed, expelled and even killed in China. Whether this occurs more or less today than in decades past is in dispute. But one human-rights violation is one too many.

That's why I, along with many others, signed an open letter from the Family Research Council to Vice President Al Gore that appeared in major newspapers. It objected to Mr. Gore's failure to emphasize China's poor human-rights record during his March visit. The letter particularly highlighted China's vicious suppression of the rights of Roman Catholics to worship in freedom. The letter said nothing about a broader trade agenda.

I would have signed a similar letter about the appalling treatment of Christians in

Egypt (which receives U.S. aid), Saudi Arabia (which the U.S. has defended militarily) and Iraq (where a Kurdish convert to Christianity, Mansour Hussein Sifer, was recently martyred). Friends of freedom should oppose restrictions on worship and religious speech anywhere they may appear, including the U.S.

When I signed the letter on China, however, I did not know that it was a prologue to a full-blown political campaign that would seek to curtail commercial ties between China and the rest of the world. Mr. Bauer's position has evolved from a strong moral stand in favor of religious freedom to waging total trade war.

A charge often leveled against the Christian right is that it is not sensitive to the difference between urging certain moral ends and using government coercion to bring them about. It's usually a canard: In the case of the arts, for example, the religious right seeks not censorship but an end to taxpayer subsidies for blasphemy and obscenity. I regret having to say that this time, however, the Family Research Council has lived up to the stereotype. It is attempting to enlist government power, at the expense of everyone who benefits from U.S.-Chinese commercial relations, thus choosing an inappropriate means to achieve a moral end.

What's more, trade sanctions would be counterproductive. Sanctions won't bring freedom for religious expression in China. They won't end China's cruel policies limiting family size. They won't stop the horrific policy of forced abortions. They won't bring democracy. They can only further isolate China and close off avenues for greater Western influence.

The growth of Western businesses in China, however, would dilute the power of China's communist rulers. As commercial networks develop, Chinese businesspeople are able to travel more freely, and Chinese believers have more disposable income with which to support evangelistic endeavors.

No one understands this better than evangelical missionaries currently working in China. Mr. Bauer's passionate campaign has elicited pleas from many of them for Congress not to cut off trade. Such an action

would endanger their status there, and possibly lead China to revoke their visas. It would severely limit opportunities to bring in Bibles and other religious materials. These missionaries understand that commercial relations are a wonderfully liberating force that allow not only mutually beneficial trade but also cultural and religious changes. Why doesn't Mr. Bauer listen to those who know far more about China than Washington think tanks and labor unions do? "They may be too close to the situation," he answers, somewhat flippantly.

Until recently, trade warriors have cited the case of the U.S. Catholic bishops, who have opposed renewing normal trade status with China. At the same time, however, Hong Kong's official Catholic newspaper, the Sunday Examiner, reports new contacts between Beijing and Hong Kong's Catholic hierarchy. These contacts are a major step toward an official recognition of the Catholic Church on the mainland.

TO THE GOOD

This would all be to the good. Diplomacy and international trade strengthen people's loyalties to each other and weaken government power. Beijing has shown itself to be supremely interested in fostering prosperity at home. Christians must take advantage of this impulse, rather than recklessly treating China as a monster that must be slain.

This need not be an issue that divides social conservatives from economic conservatives. Economic prosperity through free trade is the most effective distributor of wealth and power, and trade with China is the surest way to break the grip of centralized political power. Religious conservatives should broaden their focus beyond purely social and cultural issues. Mr. Bauer and his supporters are right to decry the immoral treatment of believers in China. But allowing themselves to be used by protectionist and labor lobbies is an imprudent approach. Just as religious freedom offers the best hope for Christian social influence, economic freedom is the best hope for spreading that influence around the world.