

LIFE ON MARS MEANS BIG CHANGES ON EARTH

We interrupt this column to bring you an important announcement. Scientists recently announced that there might be life on Mars. "Surface conditions at Meridiani Planum may have been habitable for some period of time in Martian history," says Cornell University astronomer Steven Squyres, who heads a team of scientists examining data from a NASA rover bopping around the planet. I don't know about you, but if Professor Squyres says it, I believe it. After all, it was Cornell that hired Cynthia McKinney, our Ambassador to Outer Space, to be a member of their faculty a couple of years ago. Cornell University has to be the ultimate expert on extraterrestrial beings.

Reaction to the news was quick in coming. Many retail establishments have posted signs in their windows saying, "Hablamos Martian." Target Stores said Martians would be welcomed as shoppers as long as they didn't join the Salvation Army. Has-been actor Robert Redford said he would be moving to Mars instead of Canada because the winters were milder on Mars and there is no ice hockey. Former President Jimmy Carter blamed the Bush Administration for not having discovered life on Mars sooner and said this proves the administration's Martian policies have been a failure. Sweden awarded Carter another Nobel Peace Prize and a jar of peanut butter for finding creative ways to trash George W. Bush.

The National Democratic Party expressed dismay about the possibility of life on a Red Planet and demanded that Congress designate Mars a Blue Planet and annex it into Vermont. "If Mars remains a Red Planet, it is sure to be inhabited by unsophisticated ignoramuses who don't listen to PBS or read the New York Times," said one official.

When told that Vermont was the logical choice for an annexed Mars, former Governor Howard Dean said, "YEE-HAH! And Venus! And Pluto! And Oklahoma! YEE-HAH!"

Contacted at his home in Young Harris, former Senator Zell Miller said, "That's just like them pointy-head liberals. They wouldn't know a garden hoe from a gardenia if it was sideways on Sunday." A spokesman for the National Democratic Party refused comment on Miller's statement because nobody, including Miller, has the foggiest idea what it means.

The NCAA announced that starting in 2006, the Whozit Bowl will be moved permanently to Mars to improve attendance and that Georgia Tech has accepted an invitation to be the host team. Tech quarterback Reggie Ball took a moment from Bridge-Building 101 class to declare, "I am delighted that we can finally play in a bowl game closer to home."

The University of Georgia said finding life on Mars would allow the institution to increase the number of Martians in its student body. A university spokesman said, "We believe having more Martians at the University of Georgia would be another positive step in our on-going diversity efforts. They will fit in nicely with the eight blacks on campus that are not on the football team, and the 26,984 white females from Cobb, Gwinnett and North Fulton counties."

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue issued a statement saying that, "while we view the finding of life on Mars as a positive development, it will require further cuts in the state budget." State legislators expressed outrage with the governor's comments. "I had promised Martians lights for their football field, a four-year college and new band uniforms," one legislator complained, "not to mention a two-lane road to nowhere. I think I will quit and become a lobbyist or a brain surgeon."

Proponents of same-sex marriage are taking a more cautious approach to the news about life on Mars. "If the inhabitants are just little green icky things that aren't interested in attending fun parties in midtown Atlanta, we may choose to wait until we see what turns up on Uranus," said Gay Blade, spokesperson for the Association of Cross-Dressing Lesbian Transvestites.

In the meantime, news reports indicate that the NASA rover has left Mars and is currently flying around the universe seeking out an even more inhospitable and forbidding alien environment. Scientists have good reason to believe the rover is headed for France. Stayed tuned for further details.