

Speech by  
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Raleigh Civic Affairs Forum  
January 8, 1970, Thursday

ON THE OLD DECADE AND THE NEW

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today as you begin your series of programs emphasizing involvement in public affairs. Jaycee organizations, wherever they may be located, are continuously rendering outstanding service to their communities. Again, through this program, you are making a substantial contribution toward promoting civic responsibility and providing a reservoir of energy and talent dedicated to the improvement of your community and the lives of yourselves and your neighbors.

In every community - and I am sure that Raleigh is no different - there are all too many people who shun civic endeavors altogether, saying that they "just don't have the time", or "just aren't joiners". In some few instances, this reluctance may be justified and understandable; but in most instances, you and I know that it is not so.

In most instances, these people have not taken the time you have to consider their individual responsibilities to their communities, to their fellow citizens and to themselves. They haven't discovered what you have discovered - that there is more, much more, to being a good citizen than simply obeying laws, voting and paying taxes. You know that feeling of personal satisfaction that comes from engaging in cooperative efforts

which result in real and lasting contributions to your community. Though we have just crossed the threshold of a new decade and expect many changes to come in the '70's, we can rest assured that the satisfaction derived from unselfish service will not change and that people will still find their greatest feeling of fulfillment when they give the most to others.

It is fitting that you have begun this new series of civic programs at the beginning of a new year and a new decade. The arrival of the '70's somehow seems to make the events of the '60's and the decades before suddenly more distant. And in some ways that may be good.

In discussing the '60's, the question is often raised: "What other ten years have been so loaded with tragedy and change?" The question is a good one and regretfully not easily answered. Those of us who are older perhaps could point to the thirties and the great depression, the forties and the great war and suggest an answer.

But I think the tragedy of the decade we have just left behind is by far the greatest. Students of literature tell us that the true tragedy must begin on a note of the great hope and joy and end in despair. Certainly we came close to this in the '60's.

In my opinion, this Nation has never known greater hope than it did during the early days of the administration of John

F. Kennedy. The whole Nation seemed young then. In the words of the President himself, this great Nation seemed to be for a while the mystical realm of Camelot. But as we all know, that dream was fleeting and it disappeared forever that tragic day in Dallas.

Two more assassinations followed, the conflict in Viet Nam worsened, and we moved toward the '70's for the most part confused and with little hope that any of our grave national problems would be resolved. Frankly, I think many of our people wished the '70's on us, believing that by passing into a new decade we would leave behind some of the frustrations of the '60's. And perhaps we have, for I am optimistic.

I believe that much of the violence that has plagued us did not make it over the threshold. I think it is apparent to all that the massive violence which filled our streets for a while accomplished little. The human suffering, the loss of lives and the destruction of property resulted instead in the deterioration of racial relations which men of good will will have a difficult time repairing.

I believe that the time of turmoil on our college campuses - of violence, hostility and disrespect for great institutions - is also passing. Perhaps our young people had a point to make and felt there was no other way to make the Establishment listen. I don't know, but I do know that most of us were shaken to discover

that our college and university campuses - long the stronghold of reason and order, had been turned into centers of disorder and that "demands" had been substituted for the reason of the conference table.

Perhaps I am overly optimistic, but I think that the terrible war which plagued us during the '60's will not follow us far into the '70's if we pursue the course which has been laid out for an honorable withdrawal from the Vietnamese battlefields. But I believe quite strongly that we will never resolve this conflict honorably unless the American people stand united in their efforts.

I do believe that we are moving toward peace, and I think that it is due in large measure to the public support which our President has been able to muster. Our President may eventually fail in his efforts to find peace - again, I don't know - but I do know it will be the greatest tragedy of our time if his failure to find peace is a result of the disunity of the American people.

In spite of the chaos of the '60's, though, I think there are some lessons to be learned from the things that took place. Foremost, I think, we have learned that the American people, as never before, are aware of what is going on around them and that they are determined to have a part in shaping their own destinies and the destiny of their Nation. This is true of the young person - the student - who emerged as a powerful force in our society, determined to speak out in some way and to be heard on the issues

which concerned him. This is true of our Nation's minorities who produced powerful and articulate leaders who spoke for them, though often in strangely different voices. We heard Martin Luther King preach about non-violence and Rap Brown shout "Burn, Baby, Burn". We heard the arguments of the migrant workers in California in their attempts to unionize. We heard integrationists and separatists speak out. And whether we agreed or not, we could not deny the fact that we had entered a time when people could speak and be heard.

Finally, the voices of the "silent American" ceased to be silent any longer and that great mass of middle class Americans at last found their way into national publications and to the TV screen. It seems that these were the last voices heard, for I note that one magazine honored the "forgotten Americans" as the "man and woman" of the year as late as 1969.

You know, during the past decade, we heard a lot of talk about "relevance". Students said that their curricula should be "relevant". Minorities said that government should be "relevant". We must have heard the word a thousand times from one source or the other. As a matter of fact, it has become so commonplace that it seemed a natural one to use in talking about the decade we have just now entered - the 1970's.

I believe that the '70's will be a time when the American people must think seriously about their relationship to a number of things. The relevance of people to their communities, to their

governments, and to their environment is a matter of utmost concern to many Americans and one into which I think the 1970's must provide new insights.

We are increasingly becoming an urban people. Our towns are growing bigger and we are living closer and closer together. And though we do live closer together in what should be called "communities", I am afraid that we are rapidly losing the spirit of community and the feeling of working for a common purpose and the common good. Needless to say, there is a vital role to be played by organizations such as this one. There is a pressing need for courageous and vigorous men who still see themselves in the context of a community - who enjoy dealing with others on a personal basis and reducing the harum scarum pace of the life of the '70's to one which is more livable and more enjoyable.

Likewise, we are going to have to become more conscious of the environment about us. Three former North Carolina Governors - Hodges, Moore and Sanford - said in an article in last Sunday's paper that the number one problem to be faced in the 1970's is that of cleaning up and preserving a wholesome environment for ourselves and those who are to come after us.

Governor Hodges predicted, "We in this State are going to show the way for the entire South and a good part of the Nation" in how to have good recreation and living conditions. Governor Sanford echoed this sentiment.

"Making a living is important," he said, "and that's what we had to do first. But more important is living. The kind of State, the kind of community, the kind of cities we will have constitute the major challenge for the people of North Carolina", said the Governor.

I believe that both Governor Hodges and Sanford are correct. We must be concerned about continued development in our State - but we must at the same time preserve the environment - we must stress conservation and development, both together and not either alone.

As concerned North Carolinians we have to begin to see ourselves in relation to our environment. We know we cannot continue to deplete indefinitely our existing natural resources; and I include among these resources the very air we breathe and the water in the rivers, streams, and oceans about us - things we here in North Carolina have taken for granted so long and really assumed that we would never have to be concerned about.

President Kennedy sounded the warning and laid down the challenge to us early in his administration by stating:

"It is the task in our time and in our generation to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."

We Americans, we North Carolinians, are just beginning to realize the urgency of this challenge. But I believe that at last we have grasped it and that the '70's will bring the greatest emphasis upon conservation and environmental problems that we have seen in the history of this Nation. For at last we can all see the "relevance" of conservation to our own daily lives, and the lives of our children and grandchildren who are to come after us.

North Carolina State University Professor James Wallace, in a recent speech which created some controversy, stated, "We are in the midst of an environmental crisis, and this fact, at last, is being generally recognized. The signs are everywhere - in the newspaper, on TV and in our everyday conversations. A great awaking is taking place. Forces heretofore dormant or indifferent are beginning to be felt."

Regardless of whether we agree with the solutions Dr. Wallace proposed, I believe that he is correct in his analysis of the public interest. And there is good reason. As early as 1967, Dr. Wallace pointed out the dimensions of the problem by stating:

"We are dumping over 140,000,000 tons of pollutants into the American atmosphere each year", he noted.

"We dump 2.5 billion pounds of garbage in the United States each year - 1,600 pounds per person. The garbage includes at least 48 billion cans, or 250 per person. 26 billion bottles and 25 million tons



of waste paper are piled up every year.

"About 1,940 cities in the United States have combined sewers, carrying both rainwater and raw sewage, which serve about 59,000,000 people. These sewers flush about 65 billion gallons of raw sewage annually into the Nation's watercourses.

"The great bald eagle, symbol of this Nation itself, is becoming sterile, a victim of eating fish and game which contain traces of DDT. The blue shell crab might well become extinct because of similar contamination."

Professor Wallace went on for several pages, hitting close to home when he talked of the damage done to coastal marine industries by pollution, dredging, channelization and spraying - when he talked of the waste of our precious ground water in the coastal plain and the littering of our streams. These problems, now, two years later, are very much in the forefront in our State.

I think we should ask ourselves whether we have not been engaging actively in biological and chemical warfare against ourselves. Because we are a prosperous people, we have enough to waste and to litter, and we have abused our surroundings. We have reached the point where writers refer to our situation as "environmental decay", as "man's inhumanity to man".

We have so long reveled in our bounty that we have talked ourselves into believing that it has no limitations. Nothing could be further from the truth. And no notion could be more dangerous to a people who are daily becoming more numerous and more urbanized.

The present administration in North Carolina already has moved to meet this challenge. I believe we have in Roy Sowers, our present Director of the Department of Conservation and Development, a man who is conscious of the environmental problems which face us and who is determined to see that we strike a good balance between efforts to encourage new industry and growth and the necessity for preserving a wholesome environment. My office has employed a specialist in environmental problems and we are working closely with Conservation and Development and other agencies of the State Government to preserve coastal areas so vital to the marine industries and continued recreation opportunities on our sea coast. And I know we have the wholehearted support of Governor Robert Scott.

Who is there among us who will deny that there is much to be cherished in this State, that there is much to be treasured and preserved? Who is there among us who will deny that this is in fact "the goodliest land under the cope of heaven"?

I do not believe there is anyone who will do so, so I say to you that we must muster our energy and imagination - and

courage - to guarantee that our children and their children will be able to speak with this same pride.

I often ask myself how we can really expect our young people to be disciples of law and order, to seek peace and harmony, when the environment about them is becoming increasingly disordered, when litter abounds and when quiet and tranquility are the exception rather than the rule. We ask them to act contrary to their environment and this is no mean (small) task.

Perhaps, as we move to bring order to the environment, we will also be successful in bringing more order to this generation of Americans. Perhaps renewed harmony in the environment will help foster harmony among men.

I want to touch briefly on one other area in which I hope the '70's will bring new relationships - new relevance - and that is between the individual citizen and the government which first and foremost is designed to serve him.

I do not need to tell you that many persons have lost faith in their governments at all levels. While they believe with Henry Clay that "Government is a trust, and the officers of government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people", they have come to feel that their individual power to affect the workings of government and to make their voices heard has been lost.

Too many of our people feel that government is so vast in scale, so crowded and so remote that it has become inaccessible to the common man and consequently incapable of responding to his particular needs. The Challenge is clear to those of us whom you have elected to these places of public trust to open the lines of communication, to make the individual citizen an active partner in the government of our cities, towns, states and nation. It is clear to me that for those of us who hold public office to enjoy public support, we must bring about public interest and public involvement. We must help the individual voter see his relationship to the governmental process and the relevance to him of that which is being done on his behalf.

As I said earlier this week, I believe that it is good government to keep the public well informed. Nothing is more vital to the continued security and welfare of Nation and its governmental processes. Thomas Jefferson voiced this belief when he said, "No one more sincerely wishes the spread of information among mankind than I do, and none has greater confidence in its effect towards supporting free and good government." I certainly share this feeling.

The people should not be asked to accept "government on faith". Those of us whom you have elected should be constantly going to you, the people, to explain what is being done on your behalf. Government is strongest and holds the public confidence best when this is done regularly, with candor, and without any attempt to deceive or lull the people into complacency.

I think that the events of the '60's taught the American public to inquire into the workings of their government to make sure that it is relevant to their needs. And I think that those of us who expect to serve you in the '70's should resolve here and now to make sure that you stay well informed.

In a 1960 report of the President's Commission on National Goals, the report concluded: "Improvement of the democratic process requires a constantly better-informed public. ... What America needs is not more voters, but more good voters, men and women who are informed, understanding and reasonable. To produce such men and women in even larger numbers should be a major goal of all labors to preserve American democracy." This is a primary objective of the project you are launching today.

Hopefully, through all our efforts, the democratic process will be forever improving in our State and Nation. Nothing could foster such improvement better in the '70's than increased relevance of the process to the needs of the ordinary citizen. As your Attorney General, I intend to do my part to make government work for the people, to make sure that I do not become so caught up in the activities of my office that I forget to keep the people who helped elect me informed about what the Office of the Attorney General is doing. If I fail to do so, I frankly feel that I do not merit your continued support.