

Remarks by
ROBERT MORGAN, Attorney General
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You know, it is easy for us to become so busy and so tied down by our demanding schedules that we begin to lose sight of the long-range plans and ideas associated with our work.

If a businessman fails to account for expanding markets, production breakthroughs, and rising costs of operations, he soon finds himself struggling to match his profits of previous years.

A doctor has to keep up with countless new procedures and medicines - just to stay a jump ahead of his patients who take Reader's Digest.

Lawyers are no different, and yet we are probably the world's worst about long-range planning. You know, if he is a good one, a lawyer can never afford to have just one thing on his mind. In most firms, and certainly in the Justice Department, it is not uncommon to have a hundred or more cases - at various stages of litigation - all going at once. This makes it next to impossible to keep up with new decisions and procedural rules, much less philosophize and know where we are heading.

In short, it is a good thing we have a "Law Day". At least there is one day when we can step back and expand our thinking. Last Saturday there were hundreds of newspaper features, speeches, and gatherings - all over the country - in which LAW, and not the practice thereof, was the subject at hand.

One good example is The Mecklenburg Times, to which I was pleased to contribute. It devoted an entire issue to articles appropriate for the occasion. No doubt more thinking on the subject of the philosophy of law was done in the preparation of those articles than had been done by the collective legal profession of North Carolina in all of the preceding year.

It was the case for years that lawyers were pretty much alone in recognizing "Law Day". I don't think this is true any more, and I congratulate you for setting aside a meeting for its observance.

I think we all know that public interest has increased in the past few years because small segments of our population have openly defied our laws. The right to peaceably assemble has been frequently abused by dissenters - all seeking change -
RIGHT NOW.

The result has been factionalism, with "Civil Disobedience" on the one hand and "Law and Order" on the other.

In our division, and in our desire for change, we must not overlook the fact that justice has its price. It demands our respect and our protection, and our constant nurture. In proclaiming the first "Law Day" in 1958, President Eisenhower said;

"Freedom under the law is like the air we breathe. People take it for granted and are unaware of it - until they are deprived of it."

It is time to step back and evaluate our privileges as free men - privileges which the actions of a few can endanger.

I feel like this year's theme for Law Day was chosen with this need for public involvement in mind:

"Channel Change Through Law and Reason"

Disraeli once said, "Change is inevitable in a progressive country," and I'm sure we all agree that it is also very necessary. But change must be for the sake of progress, and it must come about legally and reasonably.

I think the legal profession has set a good example for others to follow when seeking change. In the

past few years, for example, there have been sweeping changes in terms of court procedure and organization. Currently, we are working to improve the State's correctional system. The Penal Study Commission of the North Carolina Bar Association recently made 22 interim recommendations to the Governor, all of which can be accomplished administratively or legislatively. Many are already in effect, and all were long overdue.

As a candidate for Attorney General, I saw the need for changes in the Department of Justice. Soon after I came into office I established the Consumer Protection Division. To do this we needed administrative reorganization and new laws. I have never been one to clamor for a host of new legislation, so we asked the 1969 General Assembly for a concise, flexible statute which would prohibit unfair and deceptive trade practices. It has proven to be quite effective in protecting the State's consumers.

The same legislature gave us the statutory obligation to intervene in the public interest in cases before regulatory agencies. We have done so several times and have already saved consumers millions of dollars. We would not have made this progress without change; but at the same time, we would have been far less successful without

making these changes carefully. Additional progress is still very necessary, and this year we are supporting more legislation, some of which we did not even see a need for two years ago.

In the area of law enforcement, we have just recently installed a new Police Information Network. This communication system is vital to our efforts to deal with an ever-increasing crime rate.

The growing drug problem in North Carolina also demands swift changes - in law enforcement and in rehabilitation. The most recent S.B.I. statistics indicate Heroin is our fastest growing problem, and of course this means that even greater progress will be necessary in the months ahead. Rehabilitation programs are urgently needed now, and they will never develop without strong public support.

Of course, I realize that programs in the areas I have mentioned have a great measure of public support, and this makes it easier for us to "channel change through law and reason." Those who would do otherwise are generally involved in more highly emotional issues. But emotion is no excuse for ignorance / ^{of the} principle that change is not inherently for the best. True progress implies improvement, and it requires rational, orderly planning. Our laws

provide for change, and our ability to reason permits us to make it wisely. Wisdom dictates that no course be pursued until its dangers have been soundly determined.