

SENIOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN CRIME, LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND
PUBLIC SAFETY

Address by: Robert Morgan
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Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

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Senior Citizen Involvement in Crime, Law Enforcement and
Public Safety

I am very pleased to be here and to join with you in the activities of the 1971 Senior Citizens Week at Lake Junaluska.

Though from the activities I have witnessed the title Senior Citizens Week is a misnomer - Active Citizens Week would be more appropriate. Which all goes to prove that aging in the human being is relative - years young - not years old - would be your designation.

I thought for awhile that my topic for this conference was "anything you care to talk about, Mr. Morgan." At that point my thoughts leaned toward senior citizen involvement and my objection to the rather wistful philosophy of the late Douglas MacArthur that "old soldiers fade away." While I am a great admirer of General MacArthur, I do not necessarily agree with this philosophy nor do I really believe he did as he was in his seventies when he made this statement.

Then, I found that I had been assigned a topic, "Crime, Law Enforcement and Public Safety." I, of course, was not displeased as I am always looking for

an opportunity to inform and involve citizens in our work - be it young people, middle-age people or senior citizens - citizen involvement is necessary and the principle deterrent to crime .

Of course, one of the most important functions of my office lies in the area of law enforcement. The State Bureau of Investigation is in the Office of the Attorney General and its activities during the past several months have been very much in the spotlight here in North Carolina. This is so, I think, because of new and imaginative leadership in the Bureau and a concern by Bureau officers, old and new, that the SBI play a greater role in combatting increasing crime in North Carolina.

Let me note, however, that the SBI is primarily a supportive agency for local law enforcement agencies. This is as it should be. Law enforcement is a proper and important function of local government. I agree wholeheartedly with a statement made by Governor Robert Scott in his inaugural message. He said, "a government that is unable to afford all of its

citizens the security of person and property is not likely to be able to do much more for them." Certainly this is true and law enforcement must be strong and sound from the bottom up - from the local level to the State level - and I do not believe that a state police is now or is likely ever to be the answer to the crime problem of today.

Let me talk with you for a few minutes, if I may, about some of the things we have been doing in law enforcement on the State level during the last three years or so. When I took office in January, 1969, we had 44 S.B.I. agents working in the field assisting local police and sheriffs. We went before the General Assembly with an ambitious request and that body increased this number to 74 and provided funds for 10 agents to form a new, special narcotics squad giving us a total of 84 agents.

Scattered throughout the 100 counties and answering the calls for assistance of 100 sheriffs and more than 300 municipalities, these men still were spread very thin. For this reason, we went back to the 1971 Legislature and asked for additional help. It came.

The recent General Assembly provided 12 new agents, including 6 regular agents and 6 narcotics agents, boosting our total field agent staff now to 96.

So over the course of 3 years, we have more than doubled the number of field agents, going from 44 to 96. This is progress and the benefit flows directly to cities and counties throughout the State whose officers we assist on a day-to-day basis. In fiscal year 1971, these S.B.I. agents opened 1,000 more investigations than in fiscal 1970 - an increase from 3,700 to 4,700.

How about in the technical area? Prior to the 1969 Legislature we had 2 chemists, 2 fingerprint analysts and 1 photographer and 1 ballistics specialist serving this entire State. Unbelievable, isn't it?

The 1969 Legislature gave us 2 more chemists, 2 more fingerprint men, another photographer and 3 technical persons, 2 of which were assigned to ballistics. In 1971, the Legislature gave us another boost - 4 chemists and 4 fingerprint analysts. Help came also

from the federal government in terms of 2 chemists funded with Law and Order money.

So today we have a total of 17 highly trained technical people - 9 chemists, 4 fingerprint analysts and 4 ballistics experts. This is a long way from the grand total of 5 which the Bureau was struggling along with in 1969.

The State Bureau of Investigation has 6 regional offices; three years ago they had none. And there are many other things we could cite of evidence of progress.

Charles Dunn, I understand is going to go into the drug problem with you so I won't go into detail here on that aspect.

But we must keep in mind that the Bureau is an "assistance" agency, supporting local law enforcement agencies. So you can see how important it is that the local link in the law enforcement chain - that first great link - be kept strong and vital.

I urge you to use your influence and support efforts to improve your local law enforcement.

Insist that your officers continue to be provided with training opportunities. Ask that pay raises be conditioned on further training, if you must. Support efforts to provide better benefits and better working hours and then see that minimum standards for new officers are raised when the profession becomes inviting enough to attract persons with greater education and professional qualifications.

Boost law enforcement every chance you get and demand, in turn, that your officers conduct themselves with dignity and understanding which equals your confidence in them.

Urge local leaders to provide better equipment but make sure that it is needed and that when it arrives, every officer knows how to use it effectively.

In other words, as respected and responsible citizens be willing to go the last mile for local law enforcement but insist that local law enforcement agencies make a continuing effort to improve themselves and provide maximum services to the community.

And, there are enough of you to be heard. At the time of the 1970 census, there were approximately 20 million people 65 years of age and over. Twenty million is enough to populate the 21 smallest states combined.

We need you - we need you to jog us to the fact that you are there and your particular needs in law enforcement should be provided for.

With the growth in the high-rise apartment dwellings for our senior citizens, new problems will arise. No doubt, more robbery of social security checks from mailboxes will occur as happens in our larger cities in this nation and better patrolling of the area where these high-rise apartments are erected will be necessary.

You can make a concerted effort to achieve more protection and you can make a concerted effort in the prevention of crime.

Find ways to protect those social security checks; be aware of the campaign that is being waged to remind citizens to be sure that the key is not left

in the car or if you have to park your car on the street at night, park it in a lighted location - don't make the car thief's job an easier one.

If your group is susceptible to a certain type of crime, find ways to prevent frequent occurrences. Practice crime prevention.

While this has nothing to do with law enforcement, it is an excellent example of what you can do as a combined force. Congress passed last October the Mass Transit Bill with an amendment attached which reads:

"It is hereby declared to be the national policy that elderly and handicapped persons have the same right as other persons to utilize mass transportation facilities and services; that special efforts shall be made in the planning and design of mass transportation facilities so that the availability to elderly and handicapped persons of mass transportation which they can effectively utilize will be assured; and that all federal programs offering assistance in the field of mass transportation should contain provisions implementing this policy."

This was a concerted effort on the part of the Council on the Aging and the Associations of Handicapped

Persons working cooperatively, but ultimately these local Councils and local Associations are made up of you.

You know we have a great new source of financial support for law enforcement in North Carolina. The Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, operating under the provision of the Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act, has already made millions of dollars available to North Carolina communities who are willing to develop long-range plans for law enforcement and to work toward achieving those goals.

Please note this fact. The law requires that 75 percent of these funds go to local law enforcement and criminal justice efforts.

For once, the Federal Government also has realized that government should operate at the level closest to the people - has recognized that law enforcement primarily is a local responsibility.

While all of this can be termed progress, we must remember the criminal is still also making progress. We must constantly - all of us - unite to create a roadblock.

We are very proud of creating within the Office of the Attorney General a Consumer Protection Division.

There are many times when people in your age group - because you are alone and have no one nearby to talk with about a business dealing are taken advantage of - but be aware - practice crime prevention - be cautious in

(Examples and following can be elaborated)

Mobile Homes

Aluminum siding - fly-by-night salesmen

High-interest rates

Utility rates - What we are doing in the hearings

(There might be some present with stock in CP&L, Southern Bell, etc. - I remember a letter or two - but the following statistics are true in North Carolina according to the 1968-70 Biennial Report of the North Carolina Governor's Coordinating Council on Aging - Over 26 percent of the 379,000 North Carolinians over 65-age population exist on incomes too meager to live decently, and more than 40 percent live below "the poverty line.")

But, all efforts need your cooperation - use your force to help us in law enforcement, crime prevention - report consumer violations and be a part of your community.

Don't let your nostalgia for yesteryear close the door on future needs, hopes and dreams. We need you.

As the Roman sage Cicero so aptly put it:

"People who declare that there are no activities for old age are speaking beside the point. It is like saying that a pilot has nothing to do with sailing a ship because he leaves others to climb the masts and run along the gangways and work the pumps, while he himself sits quietly in the stern holding the rudder.

"He may not be doing what the younger men are doing, but his contribution is more significant and valuable than theirs.

"Great deeds are not done by strength or speed or physique; they are the products of thought