

Statement by Robert Morgan
Attorney General

I thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before this group this morning. You have many people scheduled to speak and, therefore, it is impractical for any one of us today to try to spread before you an elaborate program to improve the quality of education in North Carolina and the lot of the public school teacher. The most any of us can do, I think, is say by our presence this morning that your concerns are our concerns and that we share your burning desire that public education in North Carolina be the object of continuing public interest, support, and improvement.

Those of you who know me personally or who have followed my career in the State Senate--and as Attorney General--know that my concern is long-standing. I have tried as best I know how to use the public offices entrusted to me to advance the cause of public education in North Carolina, and you may be assured that I will continue to do so in the future.

Every candidate and prospective candidate here, of course, wants and would appreciate your support. No candidate can neglect your needs and say in candor that

he intends to serve the best interest of North Carolina, for North Carolina's interests are intimately bound up with yours.

We must not forget that 96 percent of our children in North Carolina are still educated in the public schools. The future of this State is based on an educated citizenry and we cannot because of momentary disillusionment turn our backs on a public school system which has become so much a part of the life and heritage of this State. These are trying times for public education in North Carolina. You of all people know this best.

Neighborhood schools, for the time being, at least, have all but become a thing of the past. School systems have been thrown into confusion and that confusion has found its way into your classrooms. Experienced teachers with years of excellent service are leaving the teaching field at a time when we need their experience most desperately. Worst of all, perhaps, the public is becoming increasingly disenchanted with public education making it difficult and, in many cases, impossible for educators or anyone else to muster interest in or support for programs to improve our educational system.

Thus it becomes even more imperative that those of us in public office rededicate ourselves to strengthening

the system rather than allowing ourselves to be overcome by the problems of the day. And it seems apparent to me that the first step must be to renew confidence in the schools and, by doing so, obtain active support for efforts to improve them and the lot of the classroom teacher.

For this reason, your meeting here today and the support indicated by the mere presence of these candidates and potential candidates is significant. It shows to everyone that our problems are merely challenges and that we're going to meet them successfully. We, working together, are going to move forward with public education in North Carolina.

I am glad that I could be a part of this occasion, and I thank you.