

Speech by: Robert Morgan
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To: Annual Meeting, 25th Anniversary of the
Wayne County Boys' Club.
Goldsboro, North Carolina

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Thank you for letting me share this celebration with you - the Annual Meeting and the 25th Anniversary of the Wayne County Boys' Club. I wish I were in a position to present each of you in this community with a silver star for outstanding achievement. There is a saying I like very much: "Nothing ever built arose to touch the skies unless some man dreamed that it should, some man believed that it could, and some man willed that it must." However, I believe, as you must by your actions, "[n]othing ever built arose to touch the skies unless some boy dreamed that it should, some boy believed that it could, and some boy willed that it must." They are our investment in the future, and the dreamers of the dreams that will come true.

With your membership of 1324 boys, you have made 1324 investments in the future of our country. The dividends we all will receive are immeasurable. I wish more communities would follow your investment pattern.

And perhaps they will! It is much easier to follow the trail, than to blaze the trail.

Our youth today have greater opportunities than ever before - opportunities to obtain an education, to secure good jobs, to live full and meaningful lives. However, today's youth are also confronted with situations which did not exist many years ago, such as more leisure time, more money to spend and less parental supervision as indicated by your own membership roster - that a large percentage of the boys have both parents working or live only with one parent or guardian. Our youth today are also the victims of a rapidly expanding urban society, versus the family-related rural society of yesteryear.

I believe these factors, among others, are contributing to the alarming increase in youthful crimes. And the increase is there!

Statistics recently revealed that in 1970 there were 16,000 criminal homicides in the nation - one every 33 minutes and 8% up from 1969 and 76% over the decade. Forty-three percent of those arrested were under 25 and 10% under 18.

However, I share your belief that all is not lost and that we can turn the tide. By your accomplishments and presence here tonight, by your faith in the future, I know we can meet this challenge.

Informing young people of the criminal laws and penalties is one way, I believe, of straightening the twig before it is bent. We have a program, started when I came into office, called "Youth and the Law."

REMARKS ON YOUTH AND LAW PROGRAM AND BOOK

(Papers are: Gambling; Robbery; Murder and Voluntary Manslaughter; Burglary; Accessory Before and After the Fact; Larceny and Receiving Stolen Goods; Carrying a Concealed Weapons; and Possession of Drugs.)

I believe, however, our deepest concern today is the continuing rise in the number of drug cases. This is not to minimize the other criminal violations I have mentioned, but I am convinced that the use of drugs is contributing to other acts of violence. Drug addiction is an expensive habit; it can run from \$20 to \$100 a day and the victim because of his dependence on the habit, is going to obtain the money somewhere to support it and he turns to crime.

Drug addiction is a problem which represents a threat similar to war in its capacity to kill, enslave and imperil the nation's future; similar to cancer in its ability to spread a deadly disease among us. No other challenge, in my opinion, requires more brain power, manpower and resources to overcome it.

I believe that our nation must mobilize its resources and direct more energy to solving the drug problem - the acuteness of the problem demands it. Mothers and fathers are worried sick by the fear of drug abuse among their children and grandchildren demand it; teachers see bright minds dulled by drugs and demand it. So do clergymen, who are losing their spiritual influence to the false gods of kicks and thrills; businessmen, who see drugs causing absenteeism and hurting productivity; and judges who see the courts collapsing under the crush of narcotic cases. They must have an answer to their demands and help for their grief.

What good are billions spent in defense of freedom and individual dignity, if our young people lose their freedom and dignity to drugs? What good are all our early efforts to raise healthy children, prenatal and postnatal care, immunization and wholesome diets, if we permit the disease of addiction to afflict them? Of what value are billions invested in education, if good minds are to be dimmed and distorted by drugs? What good are our efforts to instill a belief in the sanctity of human life, if life is reduced to a dismal, daily struggle to feed a drug habit?

North Carolina is certainly not alone in its drug problem. As a matter of fact, we are probably very lucky in North Carolina that our problem is not more severe than it is; that we are still in a position of prevention. But the drug-use problem is growing, and all of the allied evils associated with drug use are growing.

Let me share with you a couple of ideas that I believe would help considerably in the area of drug abuse prevention and control.

First, that to effectively control and hopefully eradicate drug abuse, there must be an all-out effort on a national scale. Certainly, the President's efforts through the establishment of the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention is a step in the right direction, but when I speak of an all-out attempt, I am speaking of an effort equal to that we put forth in space exploration. And, because I mean an effort of such magnitude, this, of necessity, would have to be funded by the federal government due to its superior resources of manpower and money. Dealing with drugs and its root causes is a time consuming and expensive proposition.

However, I believe that a large amount of any such funds appropriated should be given to the states to meet their particular problem, and individual needs. Some states may need more funds spent in prevention - the drug-use problem has not yet reached overwhelming proportions; others may see addiction as the immediate problem. We must have national support and help - but with no strings attached!

Secondly, while I advise seeking the support of the federal government, I believe we here in this State should be concerned enough to see that money is appropriated on a State level. The State of North Carolina does not provide a place for the treatment of drug abusers. The only place a person with a drug problem can go is to one of our State Mental Hospitals, and these hospitals only have the capability to detoxify a drug abuser and have no means of actually treating these individuals.

There was only \$500,000 appropriated to the Department of Mental Health last session of the General Assembly to cope with the drug problem, and this money was earmarked for distribution to the 41 county mental

health clinics. Nothing was appropriated to establish a badly needed state-wide diagnostic treatment and rehabilitation center.

In addition, only \$44,000 was appropriated to the newly established North Carolina Drug Authority, which has the all important mandate to coordinate all state-wide drug abuse education prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

North Carolinians must let their representatives in the General Assembly know of their concern, and provide them with information, suggestions and support when they are fighting for such appropriations.

I think, too, there is another answer and you here tonight have found it. I mentioned that we do not really know the root causes of drug addiction, but I believe that some of the root causes are the lack of the things that you are providing the young boys in this community. You are providing them with inspired leadership, being good parents, giving them a home away from the home that some of them actually do not have; you are teaching them self-assurance, determination, and appreciation for rules and fair play.

There is an old saying which has been traced to an anonymous author of the sixteenth century, which reads: "I shall pass this way but once, any good thing therefore I can do, or any kindness I can show, let me do it now, let me not defer it nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." This saying means a lot to me. It means that while we have the opportunity to do good things, we must take that opportunity at that moment. We cannot wait. And this is particularly true with children. We have so few years in which to mend and straighten the twig, and direct its growth upward. I congratulate you!