

SPEECH, ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT MORGAN
LADIES NIGHT SOUTH MILLS RURITAN CLUB
SOUTH MILLS, NORTH CAROLINA
MARCH 4, 1974

INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT

RECENTLY, A CHARLOTTE NEWSPAPER REPORTED THAT HERE IN THE CAROLINAS AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE, THE VIEW IS WIDESPREAD THAT PUBLIC OFFICIALS ARE SO INEPT AND CORRUPT THAT THEY CANNOT BE DEPENDED UPON TO LEAD THIS NATION TO BETTER TIMES. WATERGATE, THE ILL-TIMED AND COSTLY WHEAT SALE TO THE SOVIET UNION, CONTINUING INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, THE ENERGY CRISIS, THE AGNEW RESIGNATION AND EVEN CLOSER TO HOME, THE RAISING OF TOBACCO ALLOTMENTS HAVE ONLY SERVED TO CONFIRM THIS BELIEF IN INEPTNESS AND CORRUPTION.

PEOPLE FEEL HELPLESS; IT SEEMS THERE IS NOTHING THEY CAN DO. THEY ARE WEARY OF SURPRISE, EVASION, DECEPTION AND CRISIS. THEY ACHE FOR TRUST, OPENNESS, TRUTH AND STABILITY. THEY YEARN FOR A RESTORED SENSE OF THE FITNESS OF THINGS, AND CONSEQUENTLY, THE LACK OF INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERED BY 43 PER CENT OF THE PEOPLE TO BE OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM. THE EXPLOSION OF THE WATERGATE INVESTIGATION, THE INFLATION THAT SUDDENLY PUSHED FOOD PRICES UP, THE SUDDEN STREAM OF SHORTAGES FROM FUEL OIL TO FERTILIZER, THE RESIGNATION OF VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW, CONSTANT TALK OF IMPEACHMENT;

ANYONE OF THESE ISSUES COULD SHAKE THE CONFIDENCE OF A NATION, YET MOST PEOPLE STILL HAVE FAITH IN AMERICA.

THEY KNOW THAT THEY CANNOT BLAME ALL FOR THE MISTAKES AND CRIMINAL ACTS OF A FEW, AND THEY KNOW THAT THE CURRENT CRISIS OF GOVERNMENT IS AFTER ALL ONLY A CRISIS OF THE PRESIDENCY. AMERICANS STILL HAVE FAITH IN AMERICA BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT OUR NATION IS UNIQUE.

OUR GOVERNMENT, AFTER ALL, CONSISTS OF THREE CO-EQUAL BRANCHES; THE PRESIDENCY, THE CONGRESS AND THE COURTS. IT IS NOT A GOVERNMENT IN WHICH ALL POWER IS HELD IN THE HANDS OF ONE PERSON. POWER INSTEAD IS DISTRIBUTED, HELD BY MANY PERSONS THROUGHOUT ALL THREE BRANCHES OF OUR GOVERNMENT. SO WHEN CORRUPTION INVADES ONE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, THE OTHER BRANCHES SHOULD REMAIN IMMUNE. CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD NOT PARALYZE THE CONGRESS OR THE COURTS. IN SPITE OF SUCH A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE, THE PEOPLE CAN STILL HAVE FAITH IN THE ABILITY OF THE OTHER BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT TO PULL US THROUGH. WHEN THE PRESIDENCY DOESN'T FUNCTION, THE CONGRESS MUST; AND WHEN THE CONGRESS DOESN'T FUNCTION, THE PRESIDENCY MUST.

WE'VE ALL HAD DO-NOTHING CONGRESSES AND DO-NOTHING PRESIDENTS, BUT WE HAVE NEVER HAD A DO-NOTHING GOVERNMENT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE GENIUS OF OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS THAT IT FUNCTIONS IN THE FACE OF ALL KINDS OF ADVERSITY. THIS IS WHY IT CAN TRULY BE SAID THAT WATERGATE SHOULD NOT LEAD ANYBODY TO CONCLUDE THAT THE SYSTEM IS BANKRUPT, FOR IT WAS THE SYSTEM THAT BROUGHT THE FACTS TO LIGHT. AND IT IS THE SYSTEM THAT WILL BRING THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY TO JUSTICE. IT IS THE SYSTEM THAT WILL OVERCOME ITS OWN DEFICIENCIES.

A DEFICIENCY THAT NEEDS TO BE CORRECTED IS THE INCREASING POWER OF THE PRESIDENCY OVER LEGISLATION. OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY, THE PRESIDENT HAS NOT ONLY BEEN THE PERSON WHO IMPLEMENTS OUR LAWS, HE HAS ALSO BECOME THE PERSON WHO PROPOSES THEM. THE CONGRESS MORE AND MORE LOOKS TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP. AND THIS SURRENDER OF LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP TO THE PRESIDENCY HAS TENDED TO PARALYZE THE CONGRESS DURING TIMES OF GREAT STRESS. CONSEQUENTLY, MANY PEOPLE FEEL THAT EVEN THE CONGRESS IS NOT ACTING RESPONSIVELY THESE DAYS. FOR IT SEEMS TO BE UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO EXERT THE LEADERSHIP IT NEEDS IN ORDER TO PLAY ITS ROLE IN GUIDING THIS NATION FROM A STATE OF CRISIS TO A STATE OF STABILITY.

TO OVERCOME THIS PARALYSIS, HOWEVER, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ONLY NEED TO REASSUME THE POWERS OF LEADERSHIP WHICH HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THEIRS. CONGRESSMEN MUST PROPOSE THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS THAT WE AS A NATION FACE AND NOT LOOK TO THE PRESIDENT FOR SUCH LEADERSHIP.

BECAUSE THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON TODAY LACKS CREDIBILITY, IT ALSO LACKS THE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO KEEP AMERICA MOVING. IF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT CANNOT SUPPLY THAT LEADERSHIP, THE CONGRESS MUST. CONDITIONS IN WASHINGTON ARE SUCH NOW THAT IT IS VITAL TO THE FUTURE FOR THE CONGRESS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN POLICY MAKING; NOT ONLY REPRESENTATION, BUT LEADERSHIP IS WHAT OUR NATION NOW NEEDS.

THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM FACING AMERICA TODAY IS HOW TO BRING ABOUT THE BASIC CONDITIONS OF STABILITY AND SECURITY WHICH ARE NEEDED FOR THE GROWTH AND FLOWERING OF THE FREEDOM WE ALL CHERISH. IF WE ARE TO PROVIDE THESE CONDITIONS, THE NEXT DECADE OF AMERICAN POLITICAL LIFE MUST BE A DECADE OF REFORM.

WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY CAPABLE PERSON A USEFUL JOB WHICH ENABLES HIM TO EARN ENOUGH TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FOOD, CLOTHING AND RECREATION FOR HIS FAMILY.

WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY YOUNG PERSON A GOOD EDUCATION. WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY FARMER THE ABILITY TO RAISE AND SELL HIS COMMODITIES AT A RETURN THAT WILL GIVE HIM AND HIS FAMILY A DECENT LIVING.

WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY BUSINESSMAN THE ABILITY TO TRADE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FREEDOM, FREEDOM FROM INTERFERENCE FROM GOVERNMENT AND FROM UNFAIR COMPETITION, BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY FAMILY A DECENT HOME AND ADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE. WE MUST MAKE AVAILABLE TO EVERY CITIZEN ADEQUATE PROTECTION FROM THE ECONOMIC FEARS OF OLD AGE, SICKNESS, ACCIDENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

WE MUST MAINTAIN A STRONG MILITARY POSTURE WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. AND WE MUST REFORM THE CONGRESS ITSELF. WE CANNOT GROW STRONG ON WEAKNESS; WE CANNOT PROGRESS ON WELFARE; WE CANNOT BUILD A NATION WITH DROPOUTS; AND WE CANNOT FLOURISH ON SHORTAGES AND RISING PRICES.

SO MY FRIENDS, INTEGRITY AND LEADERSHIP GO HAND IN HAND. TRUTH, WHEN OFFERED BY OFFICE HOLDERS, BRINGS TRUST FROM THE PEOPLE; HONESTY BRINGS HONOR; AND FAIRNESS BRINGS FAITH. ONLY WHEN THE PEOPLE TRUST, HONOR AND ARE CONFIDENT IN THEIR APPRAISAL OF AN OFFICE HOLDER CAN HE BE A TRUE AND FORCEFUL LEADER IN GOVERNMENT.

IF WE HAVE THIS TRUST, WE CAN MAKE THE WILL OF
THE PEOPLE FELT IN HIGH PLACES ONCE AGAIN. WE CAN
BRING GOVERNMENT CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE, AND WE CAN
MAKE OUR DEMOCRACY LIVE.