

SPEECH BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT MORGAN
MOREHEAD JAYCEES
APRIL 5, 1974

Mr. President, guests and jaycees and jaycettes, I believe it is - let me thank the Mayor and my longtime friend, Bud Dixon, for his very kind and charitable introduction and say to all of you how much I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to come and share this evening with you.

Its always an opportunity for me and a privilege to be invited to participate in affairs sponsored by members of the Jaycees and I say that for the same reasons that Judge Phillips expressed a little earlier. In almost every community, every city and every town in North Carolina its the Jaycees who are the doers in those communities. You know in my own town if my children go out to the playground or to play on some of the tennis courts or to the football field, they find that most of the things there that have been done ~~have~~ were done because of the energetic work and enthusiasm of the Jaycees in our community.

As Bud mentioned, I have been a Rotarian ~~at~~ a long time, but I guess I have to confess to you about all we have ever done in the Rotary Club is to meet once a week and have a meal and talk a little bit and go home. So you are the ones who really makes things move in the community. Its also good to talk to Jaycees because of what you stand for and what you believe in. I think that your creed expresses the hopes and ideals of all Americans perhaps as well or better than anything else that I know of. I came here this evening to talk with you

about a very important subject of crime and violence and lawlessness and I have a prepared speech which I had intended to give and if any of you feel like you are just compelled to know what's in it, I'll let you read it afterwards. I decided sitting here tonight ~~that~~ and in talking with some of you that I would change my subject and talk very informally with you about something that I am vitally concerned about. And let me hasten to point out that I know that this is not a political organization and you don't expect a partisan political speech and I am not going to make a partisan political speech, but I am going to make some observations to you that I have observed in the last few weeks as I have traveled back and forth across North Carolina that are somewhat disturbing to me. And I think it is time we began to talk about them.

I don't believe that there has ever been a time in the history of this country when so many people lack confidence and integrity in their public officials. Its not an easy time to be a public official. I'm very mindful of that fact because I remember very well and very vividly last fall, I think it was. Anyway, it was the same day that Vice President Agnew resigned his position. It was one of the rare occasions that I had to be home that evening. One of the few occasions in the last five years that I have been there with my children. And we were sitting in my living room watching the evening news. And of course we heard all of the disturbing details about the facts and events that led to the resignation of the Vice President

and along with that news we heard many other events involving members of both political parties in high public places in the country.

But during the closing part of the news, Harry Reasoner, and some of you who heard that news report, will remember that he always closes with a commentary. His commentary that evening was that - he made the observation that some people say that politics is not a dirty business, but he said it is. Then he recited the events of Mr. Agnew, he recited many of the events that had been brought out by the recent congressional hearings, he mentioned the fact that a congressman over in Maryland had been convicted of fraud and sent to prison. He mentioned the fact that a former democratic governor of Illinois and then a judge on the United Court of Appeals in Illinois had just recently been convicted of fraud and sentenced to prison and then he concluded by mentioning the fact that one of my former colleagues, the Attorney General of the State of Louisiana, who my children knew by the way, was serving a ten year prison sentence for fraud.

And so he said, in the closing remarks, you can see that politics is a dirty and rotten business. Well you can imagine the impression that that made on my two daughters, 11 and 12 years old who knew that their father was involved in politics. What Harry Reasoner failed to mention was that - he failed to mention the hundreds and hundreds of men who have served in the Congress with distinction and with honor and

with integrity. He failed to mention the thousands of judges who presided over the courts of this land with honor and integrity and the 49 other Attorney Generals in the country.

But I think perhaps he was guilty of some of the same things that we all are guilty of. We are inclined to judge all people in politics and let me say - when I say politics I am talking about government because that's what politics is - it is the art of government, but we are inclined sometimes to judge all public officials by the acts of a few.

If there ever was a time when we need to become involved in government it is at this present time. We have seen disclosures in Washington where big business and special interests have contributed to political campaigns and here again, let me point out, I'm not talking about any one particular campaign because if you have read the papers very closely, you have found that it has been done in many campaigns to public officeholders of both parties. So its not a partisan matter.

For instance, we found where American Airlines, the President of American Airlines contributed a \$100,000 to one political campaign not for special favors he said, but just to assure his company of fair treatment. Accepting his statement at face value, it is still a damaging indictment to our system of government. We read last week, for instance, where one of

the executives Northrop Corporation (sp.) the company that manufactures the T-38 for the Air Force as well as one of the bombers, the F-5 or whatever it is, had contributed over \$100,000 to political campaigns and had in turn received more than \$400 million dollars worth of negotiated contracts from the Department of Defense in one year. Not contracts let out on competitive bids, but contracts that were negotiated.

A recent study by a congressional committee pointed out that if consumer products that you and I have to buy in the marketplace were manufactured on the same cost basis as the goods for the Department of Defense that you probably would have to pay as much as 20 times for the same television set as you now pay. So that's what negotiated contracts can do for you. Within the last few months we've had a shortage of gasoline in this country. There has been serious doubts raised in the minds of many persons including myself, as to whether or not it was a crisis, a shortage in fact, or a contrived crisis.

But when it came out that the 8 major oil companies had contributed more than five million dollars to the political campaigns we begin to wonder even more. This is not concrete positive evidence that something was wrong, but it certainly is enough to arouse the suspicions of the American people. So with all of these things that are going on, you would think that the leaders in this country would be interested in returning government to the people or at least making it more responsive.

to the will of the people. But I have been traveling around North Carolina for the last three or four months and I ~~xxx~~ have been very very much encouraged by the fine people that I have met like those of you who are gathered here.

Some mornings I am almost overcome when I get up at 6:00 and 7:00 o'clock and find that at least 50 to a 100 people - businessmen have taken the time to come out for an early morning breakfast to meet with and talk with a public official. I am amazed that so many people across North Carolina would take off time from their work and devote their time and energy to promoting a political campaign for me or my opponents. And give their money.

For instance, in our campaign, we have raised over half of our budget just from rank and file of people across North Carolina, but then I am discouraged when I see other things. I am discouraged when I see businessmen, civic leaders in the community say I don't want to have anything to do with politics. They may not want to have anything to do with politics, but there is no way that any human being on the face of this earth can live without politics having something to do with their lives. From the day you are born, your birth is recorded in the Register of Deeds Office because of politics because of government, because the law says it must be recorded there. You are vaccinated before you go to school because the law says you must be. You attend school when you reach the age of six because again the law says so. And right on until the day you have died when your death is recorded in the courthouse.

So you see whether you want to have anything to do with politics or not, you have to have something to do with politics. But I think really what most people mean is politics in the worst connotation of that word. It is unfortunate that it has that connotation. But its going to continue to have until people like you openly say I want to be involved. I'm going to have something to do in making my government better.

I get a little bit weary with my own Rotary Club, for instance. When they say we are not going to have any politicians come to our Rotary Club. Now I am a member of the Rotary Club and I know that as a politician that as a candidate for public office that a candidate ~~is~~ should not come to a civic club and make an attack upon his opponent, but where in the name of common sense ~~is~~ is a candidate going to express the issues and talk about the issues that are confronting this country if he is not going to talk about them to the business and civic leaders of the community. Why shouldn't you have people come to your Jaycees and talk with you about the problems that confront this nation and tell you about his or her ideas as to how they can be solved. So that you can then best judge the qualifications of a ~~candidate~~ candidate without having to base your vote or your judgment on the number of bumper stickers you see on ~~an~~ automobiles or the number of posters you see on telephone poles. ~~is~~

I accepted an invitation to speak at the Rotary Club in Durham a long time ago. After I became a candidate, my invitation was withdrawn. Now that was not a personal affront to me because I think you know that for the last six years we've had many more invitations than we could ever accept. But what did hurt me was the fact that here were people in that city who ought to be willing to listen to the views of all of the people, but they say don't come because you are now seeking public office.

We've been talking about involving young people. We want to instill in our young people a desire to try to improve our government and our way of life. The law students at Wake Forest University about a month or two ago organized a campaign for my - to support me. As I might mention, I'm sure students have also organized to support my opponents. And that's the way it ought to be. Three weeks ago, two of the young law students enthused with the idea of becoming a part of the political processes of this country went out to one of the shopping centers in Winston-Salem and set them up a table with posters - they had bumper stickers - they had leaflets. They stayed there all afternoon and they were tickled to death with the fact that people would come by and talk with them about the candidate that they were supporting and take some of the literature and put on some of the bumper stickers. They were so enthused about it that they went back to the law school and they worked up some teams of other law students to go back to the shopping centers the following

Saturday, only to find that during the week the shopping centers in Winston-Salem had decided that they did not want any candidates for public office in their shopping centers campaigning. And yet these are the same people that are sitting on the doorsteps of the legislative building in Raleigh so often and walking the legislative halls of that building and the legislative halls of congress so many times seeking special favors for their particular part of - for their particular business.

I can't understand and I wonder how these people can sit back and criticize the President of the United States and members of the Congress and others for ~~never~~ accepting contributions and assistance from those who seek special interests when they do so little to try to involve people themselves. I am discouraged with the State news media and I want to here and now - and I've said this before ~~extensively~~ tonight - express my appreciation to the local newspapers all across North Carolina and to the local radio stations across North Carolina for had it not been for these papers and these radio stations, I doubt that I would have been able to talk about issues to very many people in this State. For instance, how many times have you seen any discussions of political issues ~~in~~ in the Raleigh News & Observer or the Charlotte News or the Greensboro Daily News about this senatorial campaign which is going to select the United States Senator from this State to become one of that body of 100 men which constitutes the most powerful on earth.

Wouldn't you think that as a public service that they would be talking about the positions of all of the candidates, but you know I travel back and forth across this State and I have made prepared speeches on almost every national issue that is involved. But what do they write about. They don't write about anything unless you are willing to ~~write~~ attack the President or unless you are willing to vote for impeachment or unless you are willing to talk about the race issue or the question of busing for the purpose of achieving racial balance, or some other insignificant thing.

For instance, I spoke yesterday at the Kiwanis Club in Winston-Salem and I gave a ten page position paper on the role of the federal government as it assisted law enforcement all across ~~North~~ the nation. You know what the headline in the paper were today. Afterwards someone asked me if I would participate in a debate. The headline was that Morgan declines to participate in a debate. The last paragraph was something about he discussed questions of criminal justice in the country.

Now you see, this is why it is difficult for people like myself to get involved. Thank goodness that ~~Channel~~ Channel 12 this afternoon in New Bern invited me to participate on a 30 minute panel discussion to talk about the issues. That is the only television station out of probably 15 or 20 in this State that during this campaign that has afforded me and as far as I

know any of my opponents that opportunity. Yet they are enjoying the airways which ~~p~~ belong to the public of this country. We went by one radio station in New Bern - asked us to come by for an interview. The other radio station said we would be glad to sell you some time, but we just don't do public service interviews with candidates.

I wonder whether or not that station is entitled to - if they treat all other candidates the same way - and I have every reason to believe they do - I doubt whether or not that station ought to be allowed to continue to occupy the public airways of this State and nation. One of the tv stations in Raleigh has instructed their stringers not to film any or make any reports of political candidates. One of their reporters in one town told me that he ~~wz~~ called in a murder that had taken place and because he had the picture of the present sheriff who happened to be seeking re-election, they would not carry it. That same tv station we tried to buy some spots and ~~ya~~ you know up until this year you could buy about all the spots you wanted to because they inflated the prices. But under the new election law, they cannot charge a candidate more than they charge anyone else. This station said we will sell you four 30-second spots per week at night. We won't tell you when they will be on, therefore, you can't let ~~yn~~ your friends know when to listen. We will just insert them whenever we find an opportunity. ~~WSOX~~ WSOC in Charlotte, Channel 9, said we will sell only one 30-second spot per week to a candidate during the prime time at night. And yet here is another station

occupying the public airways so you see how can a public - a candidate for public office really talk about his views. Aren't we almost driving ~~to~~ them to the special interest group who are seeking special favors and one ~~final~~ final thing let me say as I talk about how candidates are isolated - I'm becoming concerned about the newspapers - local newspapers - as I mentioned the local newspapers have been the salvation of statewide candidates as well as local candidates for years. I could not have been elected in 1968 had it not been for the weekly and semi-weekly papers carrying my news releases as we mailed them out.

But did you know that the New York Times has bought the Lexington, North Carolina newspaper? That they have tried to buy the Dunn, North Carolina paper - The Daily ~~News~~ Record. Did you know that the New York Times has made an approach and offered a substantial amount of money to buy one of the Statesville papers and the weekly paper in Edenton. Did you know that the London Times owns the Rocky Mount Telegraph.

And you know I made some statements similar to this yesterday morning in Cary and I declare this morning the first thing I read in the newspaper was that the Raleigh News & Observer had taken over the operation of the Cary weekly newspaper. The only reason they took over the operation of it rather than buying was because there was a stipulation in the contract of the person who had bought it - the sale agreement - that they would not sell it ~~under~~ under certain terms. So you see there is a real

danger of a monopoly being created in the whole news media. What I am trying to say to you is that we are not going to improve the form of government we have in ~~this~~ this country until we get involved. If you own a business in the city of Morehead or Beaufort or over on the beach. If you are supporting my opponents or if you are supporting a candidate for county commissioner why don't you put his picture in the window. Help him out. It might hurt your business a little bit, but I don't think it will, but it might improve the conditions of this country. There is nothing as discouraging to me as to go down the street and talk to a businessman and have him say well I can't let you put ~~your~~ your picture in my window because it might offend somebody.

Until we get up enough courage to get involved and speak out on the issues we are going to have ~~in~~ situations like we have ~~in~~ had in Washington that have been disclosed in Washington from now on. These are not new, but I'll tell you the one good ~~thing~~ thing about our system though. It is our system that has brought these matters to light and our country with all of the faults we have is still the finest system of government in ~~the world~~ the world and it has demonstrated far better than anything I could ever say that part of your creed in which you say you believe ~~in~~ in a government of laws and not of men. For what has happened in recent months has demonstrated that no matter how high the position a man is in, he is not above the law in this country.