

SPEECH BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT MORGAN
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
GOLDSBORO HIGH SCHOOL
GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA
JUNE 3, 1974

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO BE WITH YOU THIS
EVENING.

WHEN I RECEIVED YOUR INVITATION, I WAS DELIGHTED
TO ACCEPT BECAUSE I ALWAYS ENJOY VISITING IN THIS AREA
AND BECAUSE IT IS A HAPPY THING TO JOIN IN CONGRATULATING
THE MEMBERS OF THIS GRADUATING CLASS ON WHAT THEY HAVE
ACCOMPLISHED.

CERTAINLY THE DIPLOMAS YOU WILL RECEIVE TONIGHT
REPRESENT A REAL ACHIEVEMENT, SOMETHING YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
BY YOUR OWN EFFORTS.

SOME OF YOU WILL GO ON TO COLLEGE OR PERHAPS
TO TECHNICAL INSTITUTES TO PREPARE YOURSELVES BETTER FOR
A CAREER. SOME OF YOU WILL DECIDE TO TAKE A JOB AND START
EARNING A LIVING PROMPTLY.

WHATEVER YOU DO, NO ONE CAN TAKE FROM YOU THE
IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT WE RECOGNIZE ON THIS OCCASION.

TONIGHT, IF I MIGHT, I'D LIKE TO OFFER SOME PARENTAL ADVICE, NOT ORDINARY PARENTAL ADVICE AS WE THINK OF IT, BUT RATHER SOME ADVICE TO PARENTS.

WE HAVE TO REALIZE THAT THE GRADUATES OF TODAY HAVE A DIFFERENT VIEW OF LIFE THAN WE DID WHEN WE FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL. YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY HAVE DIFFERENT IDEAS, DIFFERENT THOUGHTS, DIFFERENT CHALLENGES. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT TOOLS WITH WHICH TO WORK AND THEY MARCH TO DIFFERENT MUSIC.

WHEN WE OLDER PEOPLE WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL, IT WAS ALMOST UNHEARD OF TO QUESTION ANYTHING OUR PARENTS SAID. IF OUR PARENTS SAID A THING WAS SO, IT WAS AUTOMATICALLY SO.

IT'S NOT THAT WAY ANYMORE.

YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T GOING TO ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE WHAT THEY ARE TOLD BY THEIR ELDERS. WHEN THEY HEAR SOMETHING, THEY ARE GOING TO TAKE IT, EXAMINE IT, AND MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT ITS VALIDITY. JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE TOLD SOMETHING IS SO DOESN'T MAKE IT SO FOR THEM.

IN SOME RESPECTS, THIS IS UNFORTUANTE. IT IS UNFORTUANTE BECAUSE YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE ALL THE PARAMETERS AND EXPERIENCE THEY NEED TO MAKE DECISIONS.

IT IS FORTUNATE, HOWEVER, IN THAT IT SHOWS INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND NOTHING WAS EVER CHANGED FOR THE BETTER BY PEOPLE WHO ACCEPTED THE STATUS QUO.

IT IS ALSO FORTUNATE BECAUSE IT FORCES US OLDER PERSONS TO EXPLAIN AND JUSTIFY OUR IDEAS AND ACTIONS.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO SAY TO BOTH PARENTS AND GRADUATES ALIKE IS THAT THIS NEW CHALLENGE TO IDEAS REQUIRES THAT WE ALL DEVELOP A HABIT THAT IS BADLY NEEDED TODAY. WE NEED TO ACQUIRE THE ABILITY TO LISTEN.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU IN THE CLASS OF 1974 LISTEN TO WHAT OLDER PERSONS TELL YOU, BECAUSE WHAT THEY SAY HAS THE BENEFIT OF SOMETHING YOU MUST GAIN AND THAT IS EXPERIENCE.

BUT IT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT THAT OLDER PERSONS LISTEN TO WHAT YOU YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SAYING, AND NOT ONLY TO LISTEN, BUT TO BE WILLING TO EXPLAIN AND ANSWER AND TO ACCEPT OR REJECT, BUT ONLY WITH VALID REASONS. A SIMPLE "YES" OR "NO", ESPECIALLY THE LATTER, DOESN'T SUFFICE ANYMORE.

SO MUCH FOR THE PARENTS.

NOW HOW ABOUT YOU GRADUATES?

YOU ARE HEADED INTO A COMMUNITY AND A COUNTRY AND A WORLD THAT NEEDS YOU — NEEDS YOUR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS AND SUPPORT — AND NEEDS YOUR CRITICISM.

NOT THE BLIND CRITICISM OF OUR DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, OF OUR MANNER OF DOING THINGS, BUT CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AIMED AT IMPROVING WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT WE DO.

TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE BLIND CRITICS WITH NEVER A SOLUTION TO OFFER. THEY ARE PRONE TO DOWNGRADE THE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT, WHICH WITH ITS GUARANTEES OF FREEDOM IS THE BEST GOVERNMENT EVER DEVISED. THIS SORT OF CRITICISM, OF COURSE, ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING.

AS YOU LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL, YOU WILL BE REMOVED IN LARGE DEGREE FROM PARENTAL SUPERVISION AND HOW YOU FARE IS REALLY MOSTLY UP TO YOU.

ONE OF YOUR AIMS WILL BE TO MAKE A LIVING, WHICH IS CERTAINLY A NECESSARY AND WORTHY OBJECTIVE.

BUT ARE YOU GOING TO BE CONTENT WITH JUST MAKING A LIVING?

OR WILL YOU ALSO CONCENTRATE SERIOUSLY ON MAKING A LIFE?

WE HEAR A LOT THESE DAYS ABOUT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, AND INDEED INFLATION IS SOMETHING THAT IS TROUBLING EVERYBODY. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ISSUES ITS MONTHLY INDEX ON THE COST OF LIVING, IT IS PLACED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF NEWSPAPERS.

MEAT STRIKES BY HOUSEWIVES AND LINES AT THE GASOLINE PUMPS MADE NEWS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. PERHAPS ONLY THE WEATHER IS MORE TALKED ABOUT THAN THE COST OF LIVING.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HIGHER VALUES OF LIVING, WHICH ARE REALLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE COST.

WE MIGHT ASK OURSELVES, "WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS OF SUCCESS TODAY?"

THEY PROBABLY FALL INTO TWO CATEGORIES — MONEY AND SERVICE TO MANKIND. BUT IF WE REALLY PLACE HUMAN VALUES ABOVE MONEY VALUES, THEN WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THREATS OF WAR OR SCANDAL IN HIGH PLACES.

WHAT ARE THE TRUE RICHES?

THEY ARE THE RICHES OF THE SPIRIT, THE THINGS THAT MAKE SERVICE TO MANKIND MORE IMPORTANT THAN WORLDLY GOODS.

THEY MAKE A MAN WORTH MORE THAN THE ESTATE HE LEAVES.

"WHAT WAS HE WORTH"? WE ASK WHEN A MAN'S WILL IS PROBATED. THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS GIVEN IN TERMS OF MONEY.

BUT A BETTER ANSWER WOULD BE IN TERMS OF HIS SERVICE.

WHAT WAS HE WORTH TO THE WORLD? WHOM DID HE HELP? WHAT LIVES DID HE ENRICH?

IN THE HALL OF FAME IN WASHINGTON THERE ARE STATUTES OF SOME 80 FAMOUS AMERICANS. NOT ONE OF THEM WAS CHOSEN FOR THE MONEY HE HAD MADE. THEY WERE SELECTED BECAUSE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY.

AS YOU LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL, YOU ARE GOING TO FIND SOME YOUNG PEOPLE WHO THINK IT IS FASHIONABLE TO JUST CHUCK IT ALL AND GIVE UP.

THEY FEEL THE SYSTEM IS WRONG, THAT IT PENALIZES YOUTH AND THE ODDS AGAINST THEM ARE TOO GREAT. SO THEY SPEND THEIR TIME TRYING TO DESTROY THE SYSTEM OR ELSE TO DESTROY THEMSELVES BY TURNING TO DRUGS AND ABANDONING THE MORALS THEY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT AT HOME.

WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT, I SUPPOSE.

BUT YOU AND I KNOW IT IS THE WRONG WAY. DON'T GIVE UP ON THE SYSTEM. QUESTION THE SYSTEM UNDER WHICH WE LIVE — YES. SEEK TO IMPROVE IT — YES.

I WOULD BE THE LAST TO SAY WE CAN'T IMPROVE THE WAY WE DO THINGS AND I, FOR ONE, HOPE SINCERELY THAT YOUR GENERATION IS GOING TO DO A BETTER JOB OF THINGS THAN MINE HAS.

BUT GIVE UP — NEVER.

YOU ARE GOING TO BE LIVING THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING DAYS IN HUMAN HISTORY.

YOU ARE GOING TO SEE CHANGES IN OUR LIVES THAT WILL EITHER MAKE OR BREAK US.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE WILL BE LIMITED ONLY BY YOU.

FOR ONE THING, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CLEAN UP THIS PLANET SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO LIVE ON IT.

A SCIENTIST AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY SAID RECENTLY THAT "POLLUTION IS SIMPLY WHAT MAN HAS DONE TO HIS SURROUNDINGS."

WELL, THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE GONE UP THE SLOPE AHEAD OF YOU HAVE DONE A VERY THOROUGH JOB ON THEIR SURROUNDINGS.

THEY HAVE FOULED THE AIR, DIRTIED THE WATER AND ERODED THE LAND.

THEY HAVE SQUANDERED RESOURCES SO THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY MANY BASIC THINGS WE NEED ARE GETTING INTO SHORT SUPPLY AND NEW METHODS OF DOING THINGS MUST BE FOUND.

FOR ONE THING, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO FIND
SOME NEW METHOD OF PRODUCING ENERGY.

SOMEBODY HAS GOT TO UNDO A LOT THAT HAS BEEN
DONE, AND DO SOME NEW THINGS THAT WILL BE NECESSARY.

YOU WILL HAVE YOUR CHANCE TO HELP.

AND WON'T THE CHALLENGE BE EXCITING AND WON'T
THE RESULTS BRING GREAT SATISFACTION WHEN THEY ARE
ACHIEVED?

IF THERE IS ANY ONE THOUGHT I WOULD LIKE TO
LEAVE TONIGHT, IT IS "BE YOURSELF."

IT IS A GREAT DAY IN A PERSON'S LIFE WHEN HE
STOPS TRYING TO BE SOMEONE ELSE AND MAKES UP HIS MIND TO
BE HIMSELF — NOT HIMSELF AS HE IS BUT HIMSELF AT HIS
BEST. THE WORLD IS LITTERED WITH THE WRECKAGE OF HUMANS
WHO HAVE TRIED TO BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT THEY ARE.

JUST BE YOURSELF. NEVER MIND THAT SOMEONE ELSE
MAY BE WISER OR RICHER OR MORE IMPORTANT. THAT ISN'T
YOUR CONCERN. JUST BE YOURSELF — AT YOUR BEST — AND
EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT A TEN-TALENTED PERSON AND HAVE BUT
ONE TALENT, MAKE THE MOST OF THAT ONE TALENT AND FORGET
THE REST.

AN ACTOR, CHARLES BROOKFIELD, WAS ONCE MISTAKENLY REPORTED TO BE DEAD AND HAD THE UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY OF READING HIS OWN OBITUARY NOTICES. ONE, IN PARTICULAR, HE NEVER FORGOT.

IT SAID, "NEVER A GREAT ACTOR, HE WAS INVALUABLE IN SMALL PARTS,"

THAT SHOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM GREAT SATISFACTION. HE COULD KNOW THAT HE HAD GOTTEN OUT OF HIMSELF THE BEST THAT WAS THERE. NO BETTER COMPLIMENT COULD BE PAID ANYMORE.

SO I SAY TO YOU WE HAVE NEED OF YOUR TALENTS — WHATEVER THEY ARE.

WE NEED YOUR INITIATIVE, YOUR YOUTH, YOUR ENERGY AND YOUR IDEAS. AND WE NEED YOUR CRITICISM.

YOUR SCHOOL AND YOUR COMMUNITY IS PROUD OF YOU FOR A JOB WELL DONE HERE.

OUR HOPES AND OUR PRAYERS AND OUR BLESSINGS GO WITH YOU AS YOU GO ON FROM HERE.