

ADDRESS BY SENATOR ROBERT MORGAN  
DEDICATION OF WICKER APARTMENTS  
SANFORD, NORTH CAROLINA  
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I'd like to say how pleased I am to be here in Lee County once again. It is always good to get back home, where people and places remind you of what your real job is. I'm convinced those of us who serve in Washington would be a lot better off if we could keep that local perspective which makes you realize problems don't exist in the abstract. They exist in people's lives.

Take for example, the problems facing more and more people in this nation, with respect to housing. After World War II, it looked like any person with a small income and habits of thrift could own his own home.

But now we are in the middle of a housing pinch that is so bad even people with considerable incomes cannot begin to afford a home of their own, and those with limited incomes are faced with poorer and poorer housing.

For the poor and the elderly this can hardly be called a problem. It used to be a problem. But now it is an outright disaster.

That is why it is so gratifying to be here to dedicate these apartments for the elderly of middle income. You might say they are available right on time, just when they are needed most.

Nobody familiar with an undertaking like this can

underestimate the time and effort which go into it. Therefore the fact that these apartments are now ready means that people had the foresight to get started a long time ago.

The concrete results we are seeing all over the six counties of Region J began back in 1969, with the Research Triangle Regional Planning Commission. The Triangle J Council of Governments, and then the Research Triangle Housing Development Corporation, became a reality in 1972.

The corporation got started just in time for President Nixon's freeze on federal housing funds. But in spite of that, it has prevailed, using every possible source of funding, including financing from commercial sources.

There are several things about the work of the Housing Development Corporation which are particularly appealing.

In the first place, the work going on here represents local initiative. Local people saw a problem and went to work on it. This is not the result of any massive federal program, because of all intents and purposes there is no such federal program.

I believe that this nation was built at the local level, and its problems will be solved at the local level, or they will not be solved at all.

The best role for the federal government to play is that of resource. Let the people at home provide the ideas and skills to solve their own problems, and let the federal

government back those ideas with as much help as possible and as little regulation as is consistent with good sense.

In the second place, the thinking of the Housing Development Corporation is good because it stresses the rehabilitation of existing housing as well as the building of new. Not many people realize it, but a certain percentage of those with limited incomes do actually own the houses they live in. It may be humble, but it's home, and everything which can be done ought to be done, to make sure such people can keep their homes and fix them up.

Home ownership is not a right, but it sure is a virtue, and we ought to make sure it is not a vanishing one. In the heyday of the giant housing project, the only way a person

in this category could get a decent place was to sell out for peanuts and go into a project. Repair and rehabilitation is a better way.

The third thing admirable about the corporation's work is that it brings resources to bear on the problems of the rural areas. In North Carolina, the largest population group are the people who live out in the country. But most of the activity in providing housing has been in the cities, in big, compacted public housing projects.

Not only did this ignore more than half the problem, it could only serve to attract more and more of the least affluent to the cities, where their needs for social services

would be harder and harder to meet.

We are here today to dedicate a small part of the work of the Housing Development Corporation. The Wicker Apartments represent the tip of the iceberg, in two ways. It is the visible part of a highly decentralized project which means hundreds of individual improvements through out the region, and it is the visible result of the efforts of a large number of people who are keeping the idea of local initiative alive.

The corporation has thus far succeeded in attracting federal funds which would otherwise have gone unused, and it has succeeded in getting to work on concrete results despite

the government's disorganization and lack of leadership.

This success ought to inspire us, and impress upon us that determined local people with ingenuity and plenty of plain stubbornness can have an impact where they need to have it. That ingenuity, dedication, and impact deserve to grow and to prevail. Thank you very much.