

ADDRESS BY ROBERT MORGAN
UNITED STATES SENATOR
RICHMOND COUNTY SCOTTISH FAIR
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One thing I can depend on, as the people's representative, is the people's own sense of fairness. I have found that as long as I try my best to do what is fair, the people of North Carolina will understand. Up in Washington, some strident and partisan voices are raised. There are even folks here in the state who get hot under the collar over one issue or another, and want me to do what is expedient, regardless of how unfair it may be.

But I believe the majority of people here in our state want above all else to see justice done, and not ignore the rights of anyone, however powerless, even in what is thought to be a good cause. There is an old idea, ingrained in the people's

minds, that the end does not justify the means.

I think there is a reason for this, which comes out of our background as Americans. I think it is appropriate to remember it in this bicentennial year. And it is especially appropriate to mention it here at the Scottish Fair.

The reason that Americans have this built-in sense of fairness is that we are the descendents of people who were driven to this country because of suffering and persecution. Wave after wave of immigrants have come here, from the earliest settlers on, looking for the one place on earth they could get a square deal.

This is that place.

Take the example of the Scots in North Carolina. The ancestors of the Tar Heel Scots came to this country with Flora MacDonald after they had lost everything they had in a civil war. They were, as were so many like them, outcasts in a strange country.

Outcasts they were, but they came to the one place on earth where an individual could make something of himself, and where lowliness was not despised, but even a virtue.

They were church-building people, and canny businessmen as well, and the Scots prospered here. They have been the backbone of North Carolina in many ways.

But unless I miss my guess, that experience with being

refugees, so common among American settlers, has left our people with that ingrained sympathy for the underdog, and a revulsion at seeing the rights of the common man stepped on. That way of looking at things, passed down from generation to generation to generation, is one of the things which sustains this nation.

Now, here lately, I have had to take some positions which were very unpopular among a number of very articulate people.

As you know, up in Ashe and Alleghany Counties, there was a proposal to dam the New River in two places for a hydroelectric project. To stop it, a bill was introduced in Congress to make the New River part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

There was something wrong with this approach, and I had to insist that it be corrected -- the plan was to secure the land along the river by flood plain zoning, thereby sidestepping the issue of paying those who owned land for the loss of their property rights.

This is a legal maneuver to get around the Constitutional right each person has to be compensated for the taking of his property.

I had to object to such a use of zoning. It seems to me that if you are going to have a scenic river, you should be willing to pay for it, and not expect a few folks along the right of way to bear the financial burden of environmental protection. I introduced an amendment to that effect.

In the hue and cry which followed, I was accused of selling out to the power companies, or at least of gumming up the works for the sake of some minor little technicality.

Well, I have not sold out to anybody, and what I am concerned about is no little technicality. I want to see justice done for those folks up along the New River. There is just no point in restricting a man's right to use his property, and then expect him to sit there and pay taxes on it.

You just cannot get so carried away with a good cause that you trample on the rights of people who happen to be in your way. That just basically rubs me the wrong way. And, I believe, it rubs the majority of Tar Heels the wrong way.

On that I am willing to bet.