

SENATOR ROBERT MORGAN
PRESS CONFERENCE
JUNE 21, 1980
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

REMARKS FOR PRESS CONFERENCE

This convention really is the start of the campaign which will determine the direction the nation and the state of North Carolina will take during the next few years.

It promises to be a campaign that will be different from any other campaign that North Carolina has staged in my memory.

What you have is that the opposition party has been taken over by a private club and the club will run the campaign.

I hope I am wrong-- but I am sure that I am not-- when I say that it promises to be a campaign that will be filled with innuendo, smear and accusations that are as silly as they are vicious.

This week, the Senate nominee of the Congressional Club, the state Republican chairman who is partly being paid by club money, and officials of the club have teamed up in an attempt to picture me as the tool of the arms makers and of having a personal interest in trying to get the government to select a particular airplane as the manned bomber we need.

I have pointed out that almost three years ago I made a speech on the floor of the Senate supporting this plane and that I have not changed my position since. So it is hard to see just what influence I have been under.

The party chairman raised some rather novel points in a news conference this week and I hope what he said is not an indication of the depths to which this campaign is going to sink. Or how silly it is going to get.

He said that I have a conflict of interest because I own some shares in an investment company that has bought some bonds of the company that builds the plane I have advocated.

Frankly, I didn't know what he was talking about until I got somebody to look it up. Back when I was Attorney General, an insurance agent came by the office one day and talked me into putting \$10 a month into an investment company.

I had no way of knowing the company had bought any bonds, but perhaps it has. In any event, I had a secretary call the company and see what percentage of the company I owned. My \$10 monthly payments have given me 123.9 shares in the firm, out of a total of the 1,920,388 shares that are outstanding.

I must tell you frankly that I had no idea in the world that I was speaking in my own financial interest when I advocated this airplane three years ago.

Is the coming campaign going to be filled with such silly charges?

The Congressional Club spokesman who doubles as the Republican chairman said that Political Action Committees in Washington have donated to my campaign.

I wasn't aware of it, but if they have, there is nothing strange or sinister about it.

Congress passed election laws allowing these committees to be set up and placed a \$5,000 limit on their contribution to a candidate.

It is safe to say that every member of the Congress has, at one time or another, received contributions from a political committee, which doesn't mean that they will get any favors when votes are cast.

The Congressional Club is really professional in dealing with these committees and invited a number of them to attend a fund raiser for the club's Senate nominee. I presume they raised some campaign money from this effort.

Also, the nominee and the club have written hundreds of letters to Political Action Committees asking for campaign money. There is nothing evil about this, unless it is being done by someone they oppose.

And incidentally, the club's nominee solicited money from at least 2 of the companies that were named on Thursday.

And finally, the Club spokesman brought up the name of John Stirk.

John Stirk is a retired Air Force Colonel who served on my staff as my military aide from October 1, 1977 until March 14, 1980. He resigned from my staff and went with the company that builds the airplane I have supported as its corporate counsel in Washington. He is not a lobbyist.

To say that he has influenced my thinking or caused me to support this plane is, as I said before, silly.

When he came on the staff, he was against the B-1 Bomber and also the substitute, but I finally, together with General Ellis, the commander of the Strategic Air Command, persuaded him this was our best weapon.

Since I have not changed my position in three years on

this plane, what possible influence has he or anybody else had on me in this regard?

Now I am sure that there will be many other equally artificial charges made during this campaign because that is the way the Congressional Club operates.

Their Senate nominee, or somebody speaking for him, has been making wild and foolish charges ever since he was picked by the Club as its nominee.

They have tried to say I was weak on defense matters and that I opposed the B-1 Bomber, which they know is not so.

They have tried to say I am the candidate of the unions, which they know is not so.

They have tried to link me with Senator Kennedy as a flaming liberal, which they know is not so.

And they have reverted to the old tactic of "When did you stop beating your wife?" or "I'm not going to make my opponent's age an issue in the campaign."

In this plane issue which they have attempted to distort, the Club's Senate nominee made the statement that he was not accusing

me of having "personally pocketed any of this money" when he was talking about funds that are being asked to develop a necessary defense weapon.

It looks as if the number and nature of the charges that will be brought will be limited only by the extent of their imagination, which I must say seems considerable.

I called this press conference for two reasons.

First, I'll answer any questions you may have today. I have nothing to hide.

Second, I want to tell you and I hope you will tell the people that during the coming months I don't intend to answer every foolish, false charge that they may dredge up.

I'll campaign as I always have, by going to the people and talking about our problems and ways to solve them.

I have never conducted a personal, mud slinging, negative campaign and I don't intend to.

I'll run on my record, which I believe is that of a steady, responsible, conscientious Senator who studies issues seriously and uses his best judgment in casting his vote.

I'll make up my own mind and vote my own conscience, and no private club or anyone with a special interest will dictate my actions.

Now if there are any questions.