

Speech by: Robert Morgan

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ON THE INCREASE OF CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

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I am honored by your invitation to speak to this group here today, because though for a number of years I have pursued my duty as a lawyer, a legislator, and now your Attorney General, I can still remember the time when I, like you, was called on to defend my country in foreign conflict.

We were then involved in a World War and though the horrors of armed conflict were as apparent to us then as they are to our young people today, we went to foreign shores, we fought on strange battlefields, we sacrificed and we served the cause of peace throughout the world.

We entered that war not because of hatred for any people, not because of desire for wealth or national power, or the expansion of our territories. We entered that war because the freedom of people throughout the world was threatened and this nation offered the only real hope to the peoples of many nations threatened by totalitarian powers.

We now find ourselves in a conflict in South-east Asia. The same noble motives have sent us there that have sent us to other foreign battlefields during this century. Our continued presence has caused tremendous controversy throughout our nation and there are some who would try to dictate our strategy from streets.

Frankly, I do not pretend to know the exact course for our nation to follow. Our leaders who are in a position to be much better informed than you and I must make this decision as they have done in the past.

However, there is one thing of which I am certain: This nation of fifty United States must continue to be dedicated to the idea of a free world where all men are the masters of their own minds and the captains of their own fate.

Our great national resources, our military strength, and the strong convictions of our people "...have imposed upon this nation the role of leader in freedom's cause." No role in history could be more difficult or more important."

In the words of President John F. Kennedy, "We stand for freedom. That is our conviction for ourselves; that is our commitment for others. No friend, no neutral and no adversary should think otherwise. We are not against any man, or any nation, or any system, except as it is hostile to freedom."

The history of our country has been one of continual struggle against enemies threatening to destroy us from without, and I recognize and commend all veterans for their sense of duty which has made us the powerful nation we are today.

Yet to constantly focus our attention on the greatness of America's past will surely spell doom for us as a people; for the nation which lives in the past will certainly perish in the present. Today America faces dangers which are unparalleled in our history, dangers from within as well as from without, dangers which must be met and conquered if we are to continue as the bulwark of freedom and democracy. And not the least of these dangers is crime.

We hear a great deal about increasing crime in our country today. One can hardly pick up a newspaper

without reading of some incomprehensible act of violence. And yet, though crime is a matter of tremendous proportions, there exists a grave misconception about crime among the people of America. Partly the result of extensive press coverage, the relationship of campus disorders and mass civil disobedience to the total increase in crime has been exaggerated by many.

Oddly enough, the increase in crime in recent years has no real relation to the increase in campus and minority group demonstrations; rather, the increase has been in the traditional areas of criminal activity. Let us look at a few of the facts.

According to FBI reports, crimes of violence in the United States are rising ten times faster than the population. During the nine-year period from 1960 to 1969--murders in the United States have increased from 9000 to 14,900, a 66 percent increase; forcible rapes increased from 16,860 to 36,300, a 115 percent increase; robberies increased from 107,390 to 301,000, up 180 percent; and aggravated assaults recorded a 103 percent increase, from 152,000 to 307,800.

Over this period all crimes of violence increased from 215,200 to 660,000 for a total percentage increase of 131 percent; but you must bear in mind that this 131 percent crime increase occurred during a period when the population increased by only 13 percent. We must not fail to note organized criminal activity, which some officials estimate to consume 2-5 percent of our Gross National Product, or \$20-50 billion annually.

But let me bring this discussion down home to North Carolina. According to official SBI reports, from fiscal year 1967-68 to fiscal year 1968-69, homicide investigations in North Carolina increased over 12 percent, larceny cases were up over 25 percent, forgeries increased 15 percent, just to name a few, and total cases investigated by the SBI increased from 3,823 in 1968 to 4507 in 1969, an increase of almost 20 percent. And of all these cases, 450, or 10 percent, were drug cases. So, clearly North Carolina has not been left untouched by the crime wave.

But it is one thing to recognize the existence or even the increase of crime. It is an entirely different matter to determine the causes of crime and

the solutions to the problem, and this is a matter to which the Attorney General's office has increasingly addressed itself in recent months.

Many authorities relate the intensifying problem of drug abuse to the rising crime rate. In testifying before a Congressional Committee, Police Chief Jerry Wilson of Washington, D.C. stated, "The narcotics problem is adding considerably to the problem of crime. We find this problem even among juvenile holdup men... It is not at all unusual to arrest a 16 or 17-year-old in a holdup and find that they are narcotics users. If we could really cure our narcotics problems we could do a great deal toward curing our over-all crime problem." And why? The answer is simple. "The user has to have his 'fix.' He must get the money somehow. So he robs... He preys on the community."

Drug addition is an expensive habit. It can run from \$20 to \$100 a day, and there are few legal ways that a person--especially an uneducated person--can support that kind of habit. Yet it is a habit, so the money must be obtained--by robbery, by shoplifting, by

burglary, or by other forms of thievery. One major business chain estimates that it loses 10 percent annually from shoplifting, and this loss, of course, must be recovered from the straight consumer.

Goods stolen must be disposed of--converted to money for sidewalk or backroom purchases of drugs--so a chain of unlawful acts is set off by the addiction problem. The addict steals the goods; he sells them to a middle man who in turn must find the ultimate market for them. So one criminal act breeds another and after a while it becomes impossible to tell just how far the influence of illegal drug use does extend.

We also know that one major way to support a habit is to get others addicted--to create a drug market in which to operate and make enough profits to support a personal habit. And there is violence within the illegal drug community itself.

I remember a recent execution in the style of Chicago gangland murders which occurred not in New York or Chicago, but right here in North Carolina. The plot

is simple. Two brothers, both unemployed, maintained an expensive apartment and a high scale of living. They had a fifty dollar-a-day habit themselves and they had a corner on the illegal drug market in their town. Competing pushers were squeezing in so the brothers simply waited in an alley and gunned down their competition.

But stealing to support the habit is only a small part of the drug problem. I could tell you of a young man in the eastern part of the State who got high on drugs, picked up his own baby girl, and slammed her against the wall, killing her. Later he realized what he had done, and he hid her body in a trash dump, where it was later discovered. After being convicted and sentenced to life in prison, the young man said, "these things would never happen, if only the young people in society, like myself, understood what was going to happen when they permit themselves to go into this type of conduct."

Deaths from drug abuse and overdose are another part of the larger problem. In New York City, narcotics, chiefly heroin, is the leading killer in the 15-35 age group,

and there are 10 times as many deaths in that city from heroin overdoses as there were 10 years ago. We have had many deaths in North Carolina. In early May, a Chapel Hill boy in his early 20's died of an overdose of heroin; he had been a drug addict for three years, according to his family. Two soldiers died in Fayetteville after shooting heroin in the bathroom of a laundramat. And I could tell you of many others.

The attack on drug abuse should be basically two-pronged: First, the suppliers must be identified and the pushers must be stopped. For this reason the SBI and law enforcement agencies have concentrated their efforts on stopping those dealing in drugs, those pushing drugs and preying on the nature and weaknesses of their fellow North Carolinians. But law enforcement alone cannot do the job. We as parents must teach our children about the dangers of drugs, we must change the attitudes of young people who think that drugs are the 'in thing', but above all we must offer them a meaningful alternative to drugs as a way of life.

But drugs represent only a small aspect of the crime problem. Other authorities attribute the high

crime rate to the vast social ills that plague our country: poverty in the midst of plenty, substandard housing conditions, inferior education, unpromising job opportunities, family breakdowns resulting from the welfare system, all leading up to the kind of frustration and envy that breed crime.

Certainly efforts to combat crime must operate in conjunction with efforts to alleviate social ills, to insure for all our citizens the right to participate in the benefits of our free society.

We must be concerned about organized crime in our country. As I stated earlier, it has been estimated that organized crime accounts for some 2-5 percent of our GNP, or \$20-50 billion annually, and that the percentage is growing faster than the GNP. And further, this illegal gross national product could well be said to account for the incomes of some 1.5 to 2.5 million people. A problem so wide spread, so organized, and so well-concealed will be difficult to conquer, and the conquest will be a long time coming.

Still another contributor to the crime wave is our inadequate system of criminal justice. Chief Justice Warren Burger has said, "Many people...will be deterred from serious crimes if they believe that justice is swift and sure. Today no one thinks that."

A recent report to Congress by an advisory panel on armed violence stated: "The way the criminal justice system operates at present is an abomination of justice and undoubtedly a significant contributor to armed crimes. The juvenile court proceeds so slowly in adjudicating its cases that juveniles often feel it is 'safe' to commit a crime."

But not only should punishment be swift, it must also be impartial. Our system of justice, in order to be impartial, must assure that the guilty man is found guilty and the innocent man is set free; it must be a government of laws and not of men. Only through such a system can uniform respect and support of the law operate as a deterrance to crime.

Judge Stacey of the North Carolina Supreme Court, some forty years ago, commented on the slowness

of justice. He stated, "Though justice sometimes treads with leaden feet...she strikes with an iron hand."

Though I would agree with Justice Stacey on many other things. I believe that when justice treads with leaden feet, she seldom packs any whollop at all and in fact, brings the whole system into disrepute.

Attention is being drawn more and more today toward the inadequacies of police forces. Many authorities say the police are "spread too thin over too many areas," having inadequate personnel and having to both enforce parking violations and investigate murders. A few problems in this area include insufficient and poorly trained manpower, inadequate staff services, poor information networks, but the root of all these problems is inadequate funds; out of an average \$932 each person pays in taxes yearly, only \$4 goes to criminal law enforcement. Please call on your local governments to do more for law enforcement as they prepare their new budgets.

The State of North Carolina, especially through the efforts of Governor Scott, has made great strides in the law enforcement field. During the last session

of the North Carolina Legislature, we in the Justice Department went to the General Assembly and asked for substantial appropriations to increase the number of agents working for the State Bureau of Investigation and to expand the services and increase the effectiveness of the Bureau. We asked for regional offices, for salary increases, for mobile crime laboratories and other much-needed equipment. We were successful in our efforts, largely as a result of the support of Governor Scott.

The Governor and law enforcement officials across the state have also supported efforts to establish a State Police Information Network. The Legislature made the funds available to launch this project, and the day is within sight when all law enforcement agencies in this state will be connected with a complex, but highly functional criminal information system.

Governor Scott has continued in his efforts to establish an effective crime fighting force, and just this month leaders of State government involved in every phase of the criminal justice system were called together to discuss the establishment of a State criminal justice

training center. Such a center will be a significant step in the history of criminal justice in our state and will help North Carolina law enforcement officials become among the most efficient in the nation.

Those of us in positions of leadership at the State level will continue to work to curb the increasing crime rate in our state. And we need your concern and your support.

Knowing the membership of this organization as I do, I know that we will receive it.