

Speech by: Robert Morgan
To: James Sprunt Technical Institute
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THE VITAL ROLE OF TECHNICAL INSTITUTES

It is certainly a pleasure for me to be with you here today and have a part in the formal ceremony dedicating these two buildings which I know are such valuable additions to your campus here at the James Sprunt Institute. They stand as tangible evidence that this Institution is growing and providing greater services to the young people of this area.

In turn, we know that its growth indicates also progress in the region, progress in Eastern North Carolina, and I must admit that nothing makes me happier than to see Eastern North Carolina---my home---on the move.

We are on the move in developing new agricultural techniques to meet the realities of our day, in developing industry and job opportunities, in tapping the resources of the sea, and in conserving natural beauty and resources.

But perhaps, most important, we here in Eastern North Carolina are at last coming to realize that our greatest natural resource is our young people and that if we lose them to other areas of the state, to other areas of the nation, where there are opportunities for training and for more profitable vocations that our region not only will not prosper but will die.

This fine institution here in Duplin County is engaged in conserving and developing this natural resource by providing facilities and expert instruction in the technical skills now so badly needed throughout our state and nation.

I do not need to tell you here today how severe that need is; you know far better than I. You know, as I do, that we as a society have begun to reap the bitter harvest sowed by those who through the years have insisted that every young person should be college educated and that there is something a little demeaning about earning one's wages by one's hands as well as his head.

I think that if we are honest with ourselves that most of us have been guilty in some degree of reserving our warmest praise for those who sported college and university

pedigrees and looking with less admiration and appreciation upon those who make their contribution to society by the work of their hands.

The result of this kind of values has now become apparent to us. This year graduates from our colleges and universities are finding it extremely hard to find jobs anywhere, either in private business or in government.

To sum up the situation very simply, we have more college-educated young people than we have jobs for them. And this is tragic, for we planted the idea with our children that the work-a-day world would be waiting eagerly to swallow them up when they received their sheepskins and left the halls of ivy.

In contrast, we hear distress calls coming from every segment of our society, calls for young people with skills---for mechanics, for brickmasons, for carpenters plumers and electricians, for nurses aids and surveyers. We hear the distress call and we see the need so clearly, yet those who are coming forward to meet the demands for skilled workers still cannot come close to meeting the urgent need.

Thank goodness, in North Carolina our leaders in state government recognized the need early and began to

develop institutions such as this one throughout the State to train young people in the kinds of skills that you are teaching here. I have said many times, that if Governor Hodges had done nothing else while he was Governor - and certainly he made other tremendous contributions - that if he had done nothing else but begin our system of technical and industrial institutions that he would go down in history as one of this State's greatest Governors.

I sincerely believe this for, in my opinion, nothing has done so much to prepare North Carolina for its productive role in this technical age and make it a leader in sound economic growth, not only in the south but in the nation.

Other leaders, who shared his commitment, have followed Governor Hodges and developed and expanded this program. I am proud of them and the vision they possessed. I know you are too.

But, we have not done enough. There are too many jobs unfilled; there are too few craftsmen and

technicians still. Our facilities must be expanded as we see them being expanded here at James Sprunt Institute today. And we must encourage our young people to take advantage of the opportunities which are available.

Surely, I did not come here today to cast discredit upon those who attend our colleges and universities, who sharpen their minds and emerge with degrees and diplomas as symbols of their accomplishments. Instead what I want to say is that people who are skilled in the use of their hands are just as important to the life of this State as those whose contribution is made primarily through their thoughts and their theories. We need both in North Carolina.

We have seen men walk on the moon, heard of heart transplants, have read of planes that will cross the Atlantic in just two hours, and experimented with new means of communication. These feats required not only the talents of thinkers and theorists but also technicians and doers.

To help accomplish these feats, which once seemed unobtainable, more technicians, more people who not

only can think but will work with their hands, are needed, and needed today.

The number of new technicians of all kinds needed each year in this country is estimated to be at least 200,000 and the needs for new kinds of technicians and for upgrading or updating employed technicians of all kinds will most definitely continue to increase.

Because the technician fills specific manpower needs, everyone concerned with the technological sectors of this State's educational structure must continue to make every effort to develop the best possible course programs for turning out technicians with top technical skills as well as thorough understanding of theory.

There is no doubt about the future that lies ahead for technicians. It is brighter than it has ever been before, and it is going to get brighter, with the countless number of career opportunities that are being created by the scientific and technological revolution.

There is no doubt about the future of institutions such as the James Sprunt Institute for you are moving boldly and imaginatively to meet the demands of the time.

Today, as we dedicate these two buildings, I commend those of you who work and teach here and those of you who work and teach here and those of you who as students are attending this Institution in order to acquire skills which our society needs so badly.

The challenge before us as a community and a State is to continue offering the opportunity for our people to acquire these skills and to encourage our young people to take advantage of these opportunities.

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