



Attorney General Robert Morgan Speaks To Jaycees On Dangerous Drug Problem In State

(Editor's Note: Following is the text of a speech by State Attorney General Robert Morgan at the installation banquet of Edenton Jaycees on April 23. The subject was: "Drug Abuse In North Carolina.")

It is certainly a pleasure for me to be with you here in Edenton tonight, to speak to this very fine Jaycee chapter, and to visit with old friends here in this area. It was kind of you to invite us and to go to the trouble you did to make sure we could get here and back to Goldsboro later this evening.

I want to talk with you tonight about a very serious problem which is a part of my day-to-day duties as your Attorney General—a problem into which I have had an unusual opportunity to gain special insight, enabling me to share with you some thoughts and observations

which should be of interest to you.

I have been your Attorney General for only a short while now, but I believe that I came into office just as the drug problem began to emerge as a major concern in North Carolina, and I have seen its effects during the last several months. I think good evidence of the seriousness of the problem in our state is the fact that our Governor and a committee of concerned citizens throughout North Carolina just this past week held a conference on drugs in Raleigh attended by more than 2,000 persons from every area of our state and representing nearly every profession.

I had an opportunity to attend a portion of the conference and to participate in the program. After hearing the testimony of three young people who had themselves been addicted to drugs, hear-

ing top officials in the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and the National Mental Health Institute and others, I became more convinced than ever that those of us serving you in public office must devote more time to arousing public concern and prompting civic action to curb the rising tide of drug abuse.

There are some who have indicated that the dimensions of the problem have been exaggerated, but I will say this to you, anyone who believes that drug abuse in North Carolina is just a scare phrase used by law enforcement officials simply doesn't understand the consequences of what I consider a major problem of this new decade.

Drug abuse is not the sole and exclusive problem of law enforcement officers. You have only to think for a moment to realize that it is certainly a concern of mental health officials, of educators, of physicians and others. However, the role of the law enforcement officer is peculiar. When many persons such as doctors and teachers deal with those caught in the tangles of illegal drug use, it is in the privacy of their offices—in counseling and in treatment sessions—the public eye is not upon them. But you know as well as I that every move the officer makes today is subject to public scrutiny, that the arrests he makes are public records, that his actions are a continuing object of news coverage.

Of course, I do not object to this. However, because of the difference between the role played by law enforcement and others fighting drug abuse, the public often tends to believe that the problem affects no one but the officer. That the only solution to drug abuse must come from law enforcement. Surely this is not true, though law enforcement does have a very vital role.

To compound the many misconceptions about drug abuse, there are some persons who would have their fellow citizens believe that law enforcement officials are

in fact getting a great kick out of the surge of illegal drug use. There are some who say that law enforcement has abandoned all else and is on some sort of lark, enjoying in some perverted way the misfortune of others. Nothing could be further from the truth and, as chief spokesman for law enforcement in North Carolina, I become extremely disturbed whenever I hear or read such inferences. Strangely enough, however, such comments too often come from those who should be sufficiently informed to know better.

I would like to destroy this misconception, this seed which has been planted in the minds of some of our people by

others who seemingly believe that there is no drug problem in North Carolina, who contend that a few of our young people are engaged in a harmless, passing fad and that North Carolina is experiencing nothing more than a mild increase in marijuana use.

During the last couple of weeks four autopsy reports prepared by the State Medical Examiner have come to my desk. Down at the bottom of each of those reports is a space in which to write the probable cause of death.

Dr. Page Hudson, the State Medical Examiner, had written on two "heroin poisoning"; the other two read acute narcotism and showed that fatal amounts of mor-

phine were found in internal organs.

Who were the victims? Derelicts? Skid row types who had turned to drugs to forget wasted lives and to conjure up one last "pipe dream"? No. They were not.

Let's look at their ages. The two oldest of the four were 19; one was 18 and another, the son of a lay minister, was only 16. The report shows that all were well-developed and otherwise seemingly healthy.

One of the young boys had been riding a bicycle and playing basketball earlier in the afternoon, then came in the house and collapsed in the bedroom. His parents contended that he had never taken drugs and he died sud-

denly at 8 P. M. before his condition could even be diagnosed.

Another of these youngsters showed evidence of being beaten and kicked and officers were told his condition

was a result of having drunk household detergent. No traces of detergent were found, however, and consequently he died of drug poisoning. Though no arrests were made, his condition

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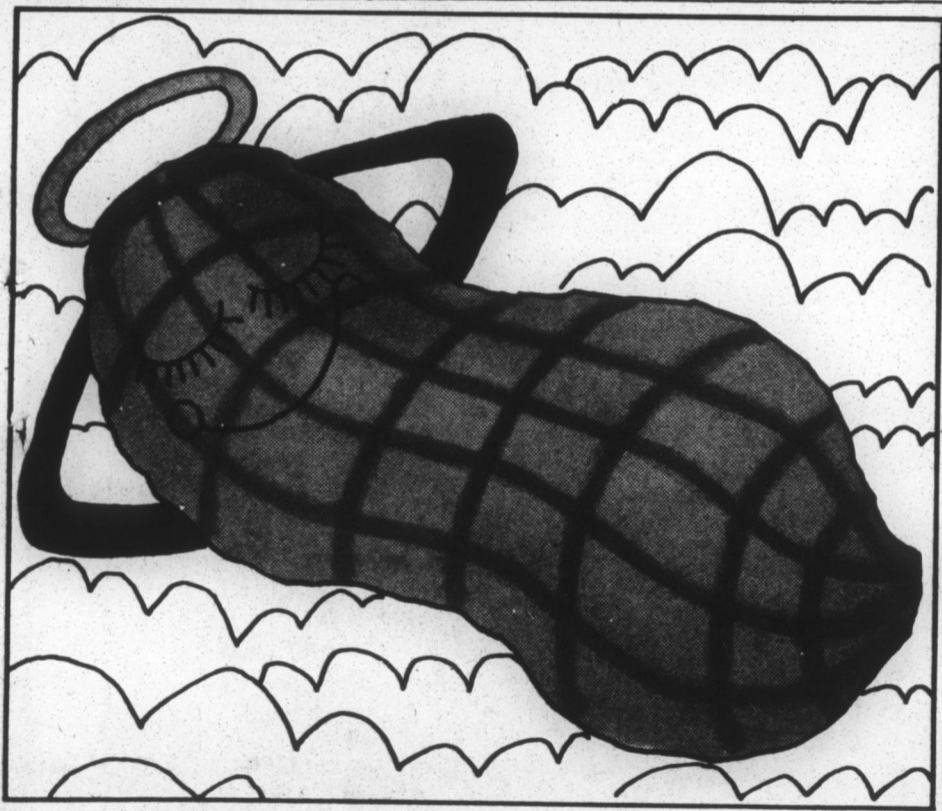
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