

Radio Address

Prepared for Delivery

Monday, April 27, at 10:15 p.m.

Over Station WLOL

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Read by
Ed Mittlebury

Govt
Reorganization

by

Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr.

Candidate for Mayor

copies to
S-J City Desk
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Labor Review

Friends and Fellow Citizens:

Tonight I am opening my campaign for the office of mayor of the City of Minneapolis-- a campaign that has as its fundamental issue the question as to whether or not this city is to have sound and constructive, yet dynamic, leadership in handling the serious and difficult problems that will confront us in the era through which we are passing.

I mean the kind of leadership that will unite all sections, groups and interests solidly behind the war effort.

I mean the kind of leadership that will dramatize for our citizens the problems that confront our community as part of a great nation at war.

I mean the kind of leadership that will focus the attention of our citizens upon the pressing problems of juvenile delinquency, ^{constructive post-war planning} sound education, and efficient governmental organization, *and courageous law enforcement.*

I mean the kind of leadership that will help to educate our citizens about these problems and that will offer constructive suggestions for their solution.

I mean the kind of leadership that has the unqualified confidence of business and labor.

I mean the kind of leadership that recognizes the potentialities of this great metropolitan area.

But leadership in itself is not enough. Our system of government must be highly sensitive to the opinion of the voters. Our representatives, whether in the office of mayor, in the city council, or in other boards and commissions, must live or die politically on the basis of their capacity to satisfy the

needs of their constituents. In America today as in no other country the success of government must rest boldly upon the capacity of individuals to manage their own political affairs.

If our democracy fails to meet the demands of the hour the fault will not lie with the system alone but with ourselves. In the ultimate reckoning the government of a free and democratic people is not merely a matter of structure ^{or} ~~of~~ form but also one of men. Positive leadership coupled with effective responsibility is the answer.

Our democracy must stand or fall upon its capacity to respond to the needs and desires of the mass of men and women who make up the community.

Through all this we must remember that the City of Minneapolis is not an isolated community. We are part of a great nation, serving a great agricultural northwest. Most of us are well aware that science has dwarfed the world to incredibly small dimensions, that the great oceans are no longer barriers but highways, that the development of the airplane is fast making this "one world". But-- while we recognize this fact internationally and know that isolation is not a national policy but rather a declaration of bankruptcy-- leading to national suicide-- many of us sit back smugly complacent in our isolated urbanism-- failing to recognize that the City of Minneapolis and the problems that confront it are matters that do not concern this community alone. Our thinking and planning for the future must take account of the place of Minneapolis in our state, national, and even international life.

We must think of Minneapolis as the strategic center of post-war advancement in transportation, industry, and agriculture. A great future can be ours-- we must set out to guarantee it.

When the present war is over serious social and economic problems will confront us. The armed forces will be demobilized and thousands of our young men and

women will seek reemployment. We have a solemn obligation to see to it that decent jobs are available. War industries must be converted to peace-time industries. This requires long range planning and cannot be accomplished by some sort of hocus-pocus. The post-war problem is not one for the federal and state governments alone. Municipal government close to the life of the community must be prepared to do its part. In all of the problems, Minneapolis cannot isolate itself from the state, the nation, and the world.

The tremendous job that lies before us demands action, planning, and leadership. In these matters Minneapolis needs positive, intelligent leadership. A policy of "doing nothing" or an attitude of "let George do it" can never solve our problems. This is a time for democratic planning, this is a time for understanding, this is a time for greatness. We cannot ignore the challenge of our times.

Tonight I wish to present to the citizens of Minneapolis a program of action-- a pledge of leadership. In the course of this campaign I shall discuss with you the several major problems that confront our community, and tonight I wish to discuss one problem that requires your attention, namely, the nature and structure of our city government. I propose to deal directly with this issue and to deal with it now.

Let me ask you quite frankly, do you understand the form of government that operates in this city? Do you know the relationship between the office of mayor and the city council? Do you know how many boards, agencies, and commissions we have? Do you know the powers and responsibilities of the several city governmental offices and boards? Do you know why we have the kind of governmental organization that we have? If I am not mistaken, your answer to these questions will be, "I do not know." Yet the very heart of democracy is an intelligent understanding of our political institutions. Democratic government is based on

the principle of government by the consent of the governed. Have you given your consent or have you been permitted to give your consent to the kind of government we now have.

Let me examine with you the history and development of Minneapolis municipal organization. The first city charter was established by legislative enactment in 1872. From 1872 to 1892 the state legislature through a series of special laws amended and altered the structure of government at will. Boards and commissions were added; powers and responsibilities were divided among new agencies. Finally, in 1892, the voters of Minnesota amended the Constitution of the state to prohibit special legislation, thereby supposedly preventing the state legislature from tampering with local municipal affairs. In 1896 the principle of Home Rule was incorporated into the state Constitution, again~~xx~~ supposedly giving the people of Minneapolis the right to govern themselves without interference by the legislature. But from 1896 to 1920, when our present city charter was adopted, and from 1920 until this very session of the legislature just ended, the state legislature has continued to change, amend, or tamper with Minneapolis government.

In other words, the city charter-- our city constitution-- like Topsy, from 1872 to 1920, just grew, without any controlling plan or purpose, by the simple process of adding one batch of legislative enactments to another. The charter commission of 1920 simply gathered together the handiwork of 28 state legislatures and presented it to the people as a charter which was subsequently adopted. Since 1926 several amendments have been added, but even more important our 50 state laws have since been incorporated into the charter by reference. Home rule has not existed. Instead, special interest groups have gone to the legislature and fostered more and more piecemeal tampering with our government. Legislators unacquainted with or uninterested in the welfare of Minneapolis have been our rulers.

This is not government by the consent of the governed. We the citizens of Minneapolis have been the easy pawn of special legislation for special interests with special purposes in mind. To this I am unalterably opposed. I believe in local self-government. I believe that the people of Minneapolis can and will solve their own governmental problems.

Start — All that I have heretofore recited does not mean that I agree with or support recent charter revisions or proposals. I am convinced, however, that if Minneapolis government needs overhauling-- ~~and it does~~-- that the people must first be fully informed as to the nature of its overhauling. The people have a right to know about their government, to know its organizational structure, to know how it operates, to know its strong points, to know its weak points. I am further of the belief that all too often city charter proposals or revisions have not been the product of the thinking and planning of a cross-section of civic opinion, but rather the panacea of some particular group or organization. Home rule or charter revision must represent the final product of all groups-- of all interests. Labor wants good government, business desires good government, but neither labor nor business will acquiesce in or support proposals ~~concealed~~ behind closed doors.

As one who has devoted considerable time and study to the problems of government, I am deeply interested in sound and constructive municipal administration. Those who support my candidacy for the office of mayor are likewise desirous of such improvements or revisions in city government which will promote a greater Minneapolis.

Proponents of reform must keep in mind that all people are not necessarily convinced of the need of reform. It is wrong to merely assume that Minneapolis government is out-moded and inefficient. It is sound and proper to assume that people are intelligent and fair-minded and if they are taken into the confidence of the planners and reformers, they will be capable of sound judgment.

Any fundamental change in our governmental machinery is not possible, nor is it desirable, unless the average citizen-- the one who must pay the taxes and provide for his family-- understands the overall picture of municipal administration. More piecemeal tampering, more fixing here and repairing there is not a solution to the problem. Such proposals will but confuse the already badly confused.

Let this be unmistakably clear: If I am elected as mayor of the City of Minneapolis I will not sidestep the issue of government reform. ~~X~~ However, I will not enter office with a preconceived notion or panacea and then proceed to search for evidence to substantiate my own pet plan. Such an approach has in times past proved worthless, and the citizen justly resents it. ~~X~~

~~X~~ I consider it the duty and responsibility of the mayor of this city to represent alloe the city. I consider it the responsibility of the mayor to offer leadership to the city. There is no room in modern government for a "donething" philosophy. The mayor occupies a position of prestige and honor. He is unworthy of the office unless he will courageously speak out for the welfare of the people.

~~X~~ Make no mistake about it, if elected mayor, I shall tell the people about their government. I offer as my first program of action a complete analysis and study of Minneapolis government.

If elected as the chief executive of this city, I shall proceed to appoint a committee of qualified citizens charged with the responsibility of investigating, analyzing, and studying our present city government. This committee shall also be responsible for the preparation of reports and recommendations based upon their findings.

The committee shall consist of representatives of business, labor, and education. The caliber of the membership shall be of the highest available. The makeup of the committee will afford both labor and industry equal representation and consideration.

With the reports and recommendations of the committee placed in my hands, I shall go before the people of this city and intelligently discuss with them the findings and the recommendations.

Likewise all the recommendations and reports of this committee shall be made available to the city charter commission. The analysis and suggested program of such a committee will be a powerful instrument in the moulding of public opinion.

I do not propose, therefore, to present to you in the midst of this election any concrete proposal for governmental reorganization. I do not want any snap judgments, given at a mere moment in the heat and tumult of a single campaign. I want, in respect to this important issue, a period of time for study-- a time element which will guarantee that prudence and daring, that conservatism and progressivism, may each have its day in court, that discussion and education may intervene, that pleas and counter-pleas may be heard in order that the decision that we reach will be a mature one.

We have an obligation in this sense not only to ourselves as citizens of this community but also to our soldiers and sailors, spread out to the four corners of the world.

We must in this, as in all other matters, be like the wise potter who wishing to fashion a new vessel insists upon knowing the clay with which he has worked and must work.

If we proceed upon this basis we can all march ahead into the better informed, freer, and more democratic world that is the vision of the common people everywhere.

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