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RELEASE ON SPEECH BEFORE 19TH ANNUAL MEETING

MEEKER COOPERATIVE LIGHT AND POWER ASSOCIATION

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From the Office of
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
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FOR RELEASE
Sunday, February 7, 1954

Rural electric co-operatives offer America's most outstanding example of farm people "doing together what each could not do for himself," exemplifying democracy at work "in your local-Federal relationship", Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.) declared yesterday in an address before the 19th annual meeting of the Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association, at Litchfield, Minnesota.

"Contrary to what some people think, the government doesn't own or control your rural electric cooperatives. They belong, as they should, to the farmers themselves.

"You didn't ask our Federal government to come into your local communities and build electric distribution lines. You did it yourselves -- by organizing cooperatives and districts to build your own lines. You organized rural cooperatives and power districts because that was your only way of providing a democratic basis for the conduct of this essential service.

"All that the Federal government has done has been meet your requests to help provide the know-how, the low-cost credit, and the freedom to obtain a source, of wholesale power supply," Senator Humphrey declared.

What REA has meant in raising the living standards of Minnesota farm families, eliminating drudgery of the farm housewife, and increasing the efficient production of agricultural commodities while lightening the work-load on the farmer was emphasized by Senator Humphrey in revealing that "94.8 per cent of Minnesota's farms now have electricity, compared to only 6.8 percent when this program was started in 1935".

The Norris-Rayburn Act of 1936 establishing the REA "extended practical Federal partnership to rural communities throughout the whole country, which for many years had been vainly seeking a share in the electric age," Senator Humphrey declared, paying tribute to the role of "that late, great Senator, George Norris of Nebraska."

Despite the vast progress that has been made, "the job is far from finished," he added.

"We've brought electric power to the farms, but our challenge now is to keep up with the need by heavying-up our lines, and seeking to keep the cost of power to the lowest possible levels by encouraging the development of every possible source."

Forecasts for the years ahead indicate "we're going to need all the electric energy we can produce -- from public and private sources alike", he declared.

Senator Humphrey forecast the approach of a "new era of Atomic power" in the not-too-distant future, calling attention to "pilot plants" already conducting experiments with use of atomic energy for creation of power.

"Our challenge once again will be to protect the public's interest in the vast public expenditures that have gone into development of Atomic energy -- and see that the benefits of future low-cost power are spread among all the people rather than diverted into private gain of any power monopoly," he declared.

Charges of attempts to seek a "public power monopoly" are "utterly false and ridiculous", he declared in pointing out that 87% of the country's power is now provided by private power companies, and only 13% from public power sources.

"But the fact remains that all power rates are cheapest in relation to their nearness to public power developments," he declared, adding that Minnesota -- lacking access to public power sources -- "had the second highest rate of wholesale power costs to your co-ops of any state in the Union".



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