

Full

STATEMENT BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY NOVEMBER 3, 1962

I want to make a statement this morning in reference to the situation that has developed around the highway program in Minnesota. I do this now simply because the name of a very fine man, Congressman John Blatnik, has been brought into the controversy. I have made no statements prior to last night on the highway controversy, feeling that it was to be left to the Bureau of Public Roads and to the responsible officials.

Now here are the facts about the highway program. First, this story was not broken by any politician. It was made available to the public by the Minneapolis Tribune, which broke the story -- not the DFL. And the local Minneapolis Tribune story was then confirmed by the Washington Bureau of the Minneapolis Star Tribune and subsequently by the Time-Life television station here in the Twin Cities. The allegations of violations of federal standards by the young Minnesota State Highway Inspector, Robert O'Donnell, have since been verified point-by-point by the Bureau of Public Roads. And additional violations have been found which have impelled the Bureau of Public Roads to order a full scale investigation of the entire 13 1/2 mile interstate highway project. These violations are not just excusable oversights; these appear to be willful premeditated violations; the Minnesota inspector who discovered these violations swears that he was ordered to violate state and federal specifications. And this is a serious charge.

Therefore I charge the Governor of Minnesota with attempting to obstruct a Federal investigation into the use of Federal funds. I charge Elmer Andersen with attempting to use political pressure and intimidation on the Secretary of Commerce to call off this investigation. I charge Governor Elmer Andersen with a crude, partisan, and self-serving attempt to attack the integrity and competence of the Bureau of Public Roads and to prevent that Bureau from carrying out its duty under the law to investigate complaints and charges pertaining to the Federal Highway program.

I charge the Governor with the speed-up of Highway 35 for his personal political campaign purposes, a speed-up which violated Federal standards, jeopardized the good name of a contractor, ignored the inspection reports of a state employee and brings the Minnesota State Highway Department under a cloud of suspicion.

I charge the Governor and his Commissioner of Highways with incompetence, inefficiency, neglect, mismanagement and a reckless use of public funds. I charge the Governor with engaging in a deceitful, dishonest, irresponsible attack upon an employee of his Minnesota Highway Department, upon the Bureau of Public Roads and upon Congressman Blatnik in order to cover up a scandal of significant proportions in his own administration.

And I finally charge this Governor Elmer Andersen with outright political cowardice in refusing to meet Congressman Blatnik after issuing a fake charge to the Congressman and impugning his integrity and his honor.

Finally, this is the first time any governor has attempted to obstruct an investigation by the Bureau of Public Roads. In twenty other states the governors have helped with the investigation.



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