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THOUGHTS ON MAYOR DAYS
FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHY
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I recall when Ralph E. Dickman, County Commissioner of Hennepin County, passed away and it became my duty as mayor of Minneapolis to recommend his successor. There were tremendous pressures brought to bear upon me to appoint someone from the labor movement. After all I was the labor-endorsed candidate for mayor and had worked very closely with the labor movement in Minneapolis. But I did feel that the Hennepin County Commission, which is a very important governmental body, needed some new thinking and some new vitality.

I consulted with my aides in the Mayor's Office and particularly with Arthur Naftalin, who was at that time my press secretary and assistant. We came to the conclusion that it would be desirable to pick a young man, someone who had no claims upon him and someone who could bring some new thought and hopefully some new ideas to county government.

There was such a young man over at the University of Minnesota as a teaching assistant. His name was Richard O. Hanson. His parents had lived in southeast Minneapolis for a long time. His mother operated a small ice cream store on the corner of 5th and 14th Avenue, S.E. It was a very popular place for college students and people in the neighborhood. I recall that they had over 30 different varieties and kinds of ice cream.

Richard worked there in his spare time helping his mother while at the same time he was in graduate school at the University of Minnesota and serving as a teaching assistant. As I recall, Dick was about 23 years of age.

I called him into the office and had a talk with him and said that I was considering appointing him as Hennepin County Commissioner. To say the least, he was flabbergasted. He didn't have the slightest idea that he was being considered for any kind of political job. Nevertheless, the more I thought about it the more it seemed sensible that we select someone new and someone that would not have loyalties over and beyond the call of good government.

There was a period of soul searching -- because I still felt very kindly towards the labor movement and some obligation to them. But quite honestly I couldn't bring myself to appoint the people being recommended and it would be no good to appoint someone else. In my relations with the labor movement, I found that it wanted to make its own recommendations and then to have the mayor make his appointments on the basis of those recommendations.

However, I preferred to make my own selections and hopefully to get the support of the labor movement. Sometimes I was able to do this and sometimes not. In this instance, Richard Hanson had no connections with the labor movement. He was a Democrat and a progressive-minded citizen. He had no practical experience in government, but he was a graduate student in political science. So I appointed him, and all hell broke loose.

The AFL, of Minneapolis, and the CIO, of Hennepin County, blasted me for the appointment. After all, Richard had succeeded a man by the name of Ralph Dickman that was a Farmer Laborite and very close to the labor movement. I felt the only thing for me to do was to get out of town and let the dust settle, which I proceeded to do at once.

I left Richard Hanson appointed -- because the power of appointment was mine, and went to the countryside and hid out, so to speak, until the anger of the labor leaders was at least somewhat subdued. Then I returned to the fray about two days later and was met with severe criticism. But the appointment stuck. Richard Hanson was the new County Commissioner. And he has served to the present time without interruption and has served admirably, honestly, and responsibly.

I recall another instance where despite my close relationship with organized labor, I felt compelled to resist them on what seemed at the time a very important issue. The City Council had voted pay raises for the city workers. I wanted them to have a pay raise. I always have believed that it was a part of good government to see that the employees were properly compensated. However, we had no way to have an unbalanced budget. We either had to have the revenues or we couldn't expend the money. They City Council proceeded to vote the pay raise without the revenues. I at once vetoed the ordinance. This set up a howl like a winter storm, like a winter wind blowing through a Minnesota forest.

I again employed my favorite tactic under circumstances like this. I proceeded to join my wife and children up at Annandale, Minnesota, where they were spending a week's summer vacation at Clear Lake. I just got out of town and let the complaints pour into the office, with prominent leaders of organized labor pouding the table asking where I was, what I was doing, and how could they get a hold of me. Fortunately, my staff protected my privacy and refused to tell where I was. When I came back after the weekend, it was clear that the storm had somewhat subsided.

I then called in the members of the City Council and certain of the labor leaders and said that we had to raise the money. If we could raise the money, I would sign the pay increase. We proceeded forthwith to look over all the license fees that the city granted. And, in the process of doing so, we found many license fees that had not been adjusted for years. They surely needed it. We then drew up a new schedule of license fees which in turn produced adequate revenue to provide a reasonable increase in pay for the city workers.

Sometimes it is necessary to, as they put it, "bite the bullet" to force recognition of the problem, even if at the moment it seems distasteful and troublesome. This I had to do in the instance of the pay increase. The city license schedule was very much outdated and obsolete. It needed revision and the license fees surely were not exhorbitant. We had to provide revenues if the city was to do its job and particularly if it were to provide adequate compensation for its employees. I had the same experience, of course, with the police department.

I wanted to increase the police pay, particularly for the rookie patrolmen. After all, our pay scale was very low and the patrolmen simply couldn't get by as honest cops on that kind of a pay scale. I recommended a 40-hour work week for our police department. I believe it was the first 40-hour work week for a police department in the United States. It passed the City Council. But then in order to meet the requirements of a 40-hour work week, we simply had to have more police. At the same time, we needed to increase the basic pay schedule for our police officers.

The answer to our problem was to take a look at the license fees for beer licenses, off-sell and on-sell liquor licenses, night clubs, hotels, and restaurants. I called in the owners, or managers, of the several businesses and just plain laid it on the line. I said to them that it was to their advantage to have an honest police department because there would be no shake down by our police. There was no need to pay off the mayor or the chief of police. We were going to have no corruption. We were going to enforce the law.

I also told those that operated the night clubs and the places where beer and liquor were sold that I would insist upon a rigid law enforcement. But it would be fair and impartial. There would be no pressure brought to bear on anyone, except that they must adhere to the ordinances relating to the sale of liquor and beer and the time for opening and closing. I would tolerate no violation of the law insofar as the sale to juveniles.

It was automatic that if a bartender or the owner of a bar or a liquor establishment sold intoxicating liquor to a juvenile that the license would be immediately revoked. There was no chance for it to be recouped. The rules were clear and unmistakable.

I also pointed out that in the long run it would be to the advantage of all of those in the liquor and entertainment business to have a clean city, to have rules that were impartially enforced, and to have a police department that was not in any way going to bring pressure to bear on any legitimate business or seek any special favors.

Strangely enough, those who were the owners or the managers seemed to agree. I asked that they proceed at once to the Ways and Means Committee of the City Council and testify on behalf of the increase of their licenses for on-sale and off-sale liquor for night clubs, hotels, and restaurants. Some of them weren't pleased, of course, but they did not put up any firm line of resistance.

And as a result, the City Council increased the license fees, raised sufficient revenue to increase the number of police officers and at the same time to increase the salary of our officers, and to provide for a 40-hour work week. I believe this was the most significant improvement that had taken place in law enforcement in a major city for many years.

The Minneapolis Police department took on a new spirit, revitalized morale, became a much more effective law enforcement body. The people in business knew they were not being harassed, knew there would be no favoritism and that they could operate their businesses according to the rules and standards of conduct laid down by city ordinances. From that time on, I had very little trouble with the places of entertainment and those businesses engaged in the liquor business. In fact, they became strong supporters realizing that it was to their advantage to have fair and impartial police administration.

I recall the struggle for picking the Chief of Police. I may have already discussed this. And, if I haven't, remind me. It was when I went to see J. Edgar Hoover as to who ought to be Chief.

Let's review it once again in case I had forgotten to put it in the earlier dictation. After I had been elected Mayor in 1945, with the cooperation and support of the coalition in Minneapolis on a rather non-partisan basis, I discussed the appointment of the Chief of Police with an old friend and prominent business executive with the Pillsbury Company, Mr. J. Bradshaw Mintener. He was the corporate counsel. Brad Mintener was determined to improve the police administration and law enforcement in the city.



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