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STATEMENT BY MAYOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY BEFORE THE CITY CHARTER
COMMISSION, THURSDAY, NOV. 1, 1945

During the four months that I have been serving as Mayor I have had the opportunity to observe at close range the operation of Minneapolis city government, both as it concerns the Mayor's office and as it concerns the over-all city administration.

On the basis of my experience to date I am submitting several observations that may be helpful to the Charter Commission in its deliberations. I should like, however, to state that any suggestions that I may offer for altering our governmental machinery are presented at this time primarily for the purpose of providing useful information that may lead to the development of specific changes and are not intended to be final recommendations.

I would welcome an opportunity, at a later date, to appear again before the Commission to present for its consideration a more detailed plan for governmental reorganization. That plan, however, should be prepared in consultation with community leaders representing all sections of the city, and it should embody the ideas which are acceptable to the overwhelming majority of citizens.

Accordingly, I am planning, at an early date, to establish a mayor's committee on governmental reorganization with which I will consult before presenting my specific recommendations. Such a step is essential, I believe, to the success of any plan to modernize our government because it is useless to submit proposals to the electorate if we cannot reasonably expect the electorate to act upon them favorably.

By considering changes in consultation with leaders of all

sections of the community-- geographic, economic, and political-- we can, I believe, overcome the obstacle of public indifference that has, in the past, so hampered the efforts to modernize and improve our government. That such indifference does exist was shown in The Minnesota Poll of Nov. 19, 1944, in which only 27 per cent of the people of Minneapolis were in agreement with the statement, "Minneapolis does not have as efficient city government as it should, and some changes should be made to bring it up to date."

I stress this point because I believe the most important factor in governmental reorganization is the winning of popular support, and we cannot win such support if the Commission's proposals do not have widespread acceptance even before they are submitted for vote by the people.

Therefore, I offer the following observations only tentatively and in a spirit of searching and analysis rather than as conclusive recommendations:

(1) As it now functions, the city government suffers from the lack of centralized administrative responsibility. Administrative functions today are being performed by the Mayor's office, by the City Council, the Park Board, the Welfare Board, the Library Board, the Board of Estimate and Taxation, the City Comptroller, the City Treasurer, the Building Commission, and the four independent retirement fund agencies. With administrative responsibility spread over so wide a range of boards, commissions, and individual office-holders, the city's business is conducted amid great confusion and without appropriate centralized direction.

It is axiomatic in government that wherever authority is

diffused inefficiency is certain to result. The American experience in government has demonstrated conclusively that administrative functions ought to be consolidated in one branch which is headed by a single chief executive.

(2) Much of the city's business today is being performed by the various independent boards. The personnel of these boards vary in terms of membership. Some are appointive, such as the Welfare Board; others are partially appointed, such as the Library Board, and others are totally elective, such as the Park Board. The Mayor serves as an ex-officio member on all boards and commissions, except the School Board, and, in addition, is a member of the two intercity boards dealing with sanitation and aviation. Because of the differing schemes for selection of personnel, there is great confusion in the public mind concerning the operation of these various agencies. At the best, administration by a board is cumbersome and inefficient. Policy determination and ministerial functions are inevitably confused, resulting in the development of many obstructions to the smoother operation of the city's business.

The many boards were established in a helter-skelter fashion without due consideration to the inter-relationships between them. As a result, there is no over-all administrative scheme which guides the city officials in their work. The policy determining functions of the boards rightfully belong to the City Council and the administering functions of the boards rightfully belong to a centralized executive branch.

(3) The position of the mayor in our system is most unusual. He is the chief executive of the city, and the public, not under-

standing the real nature of its government, holds him responsible for the administration of all city functions. In fact, the mayor has authority to administer only the Police Department. He does serve as an ex-officio member of the many boards and commissions, but, owing to the fact that he is a member of so many boards, he is unable to give very much time to any of them, and, as a result, his participation does not greatly assist the functioning of the boards.

Actually, the mayor's schedule is so crowded with board and commission meetings that it is impossible for him to discharge adequately the many responsibilities which are placed upon him by virtue of his position as chief executive.

Responsibility for administration of all city functions should be centralized in one branch of government designed along orthodox hierarchical lines with the mayor serving in fact, as well as in name, as the chief executive.

(4) The City Council, unlike most representative assemblies, has both legislative and administrative authority. In addition to exercising its ordinance power, the City Council selects the City Attorney, the City Clerk, the City Assessor, the Building Inspector, the City Engineer, the Superintendent of Licenses, Weights, and Measures, the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, the City Purchasing Agent, and the Supervisor of the Waterworks Department. As a result, these heads of departments come under the direct control of the City Council. Thus, we have a situation in which the same branch of government which determines policy is also responsible for the execution of that policy.

The inefficiency of this system is intensified by the existence

of the many boards which dilute the power of the Council and reduce the legislative authority to a point where even the City Council is unable to exercise sufficient authority to provide an overall legislative or financial program for the city.

The City Council ought to have all legislative authority and it ought to be divested of its administrative functions which should be placed where it rightfully belongs and that is in a separate administrative branch of the city government.

With respect further to the City Council, there is good reason to regard its number of 26 as unnecessarily large. The work of the Council possibly could be done more efficiently and more expeditiously by a membership smaller than its present size. It should be clear, however, that size of the Council body is not the major issue. The present council of 26 members vested with full responsibility for legislative and financial action can adequately perform its tasks.

In this connection it should be pointed out that the City Council has, considering the many limitations upon its authority and the many handicaps with which it has had to work, done a remarkable job and is deserving of the highest gratitude of the public. This observation, however, does not argue against the advisability of a smaller council with complete legislative authority.

The council would be further strengthened by increasing the salary base for its members so that salaries are commensurate with the responsibilities of the office and the size of the city. This observation is also applicable to the Mayor and other administrative officials.

(5) One specific and important difficulty that arises as a result of the confusion in administration and policy determining

functions among the various boards is the absence of a central budgetary scheme. The City Comptroller's function is now limited to one of an accounting nature and he does not serve as a budgetary official in a fashion that would provide the drafting of an annual budget to serve as the basis for sound financial administration.

I would urge that the functions of the City Treasurer and the City Comptroller be carefully examined with the aim in mind of consolidating certain functions. The objective would be proper pre- and post-auditing procedures and centralized budgeting procedures which would be accompanied by continuing research into the needs and operations of each of the various departments.

In other words, there is need in our city government for a single agency or department, responsible either to the electorate directly or to the chief executive, which would be entrusted with the accounting and budgeting functions for all city operations.

(6) In all that I have said, I have purposely made no mention of the School Board for the reason that it has been traditional for the School District to operate independently from the city government. I favor the continued independence of the School District.

In view of these observations I would recommend that the commission consider reorganization proposals that would do the following:

- (1) Eliminate the existing independent boards and commissions and give their administrative functions over to a single administrative branch centralized under the Mayor and place their legislative functions -- including full responsibility for all tax and appropriation measure -- back in the City Council where they rightfully belong.

- (2) Remove the functions of an administrative nature now

executed by the City Council and place them under the centralized administrative branch under the Mayor.

(3) Establish a centralized budgeting and accounting department, equipped with research facilities, to be headed by a single administrator responsible either to the electorate directly or to the chief executive.

(4) Increase the salary base for Council members, for the Mayor and for other administrative officials, so that it is commensurate with the responsibilities of their offices.

(5) Maintain the independence of the School Board.

In short, I favor what is commonly known as the "strong" mayor-council form of government. This is the pattern that is traditionally followed by our state and national governments and by many of the larger cities. Under this plan, there is a separation of legislative and administrative functions which places definite responsibility where it belongs.

Under the mayor there should be from five to seven major departments which would regroup, on a more intelligent and systematic basis, the many operating functions of the city government. This would make for greater efficiency, more centralized responsibility, and less confusion.

We must remember that the Minneapolis form of government was never systematically planned. We still operate under a charter originally granted in 1872 by the State Legislature and which became the home-rule charter in 1920 when all the amendatory acts of the State Legislature were gathered together with the original charter and adopted. Since that time there has been much state

legislation which superceded the charter and which has been incorporated into the city's fundamental law. As a result, we have an archaic form of government. The wonder is that it has worked as well as it has.



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