Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science

Volume 33 | Number 1 Article 15

1965

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Truman David Wood
Mankato State College

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TRUMAN DAVID WOOD[1]
Mankato State College

ABSTRACT—A part of the legislative reapportionment conflict in Minnesota was a product of distarted perceptions by political actors such as the Minnesota Farm Bureau. The Bureau's reaction to the Governor's Commission on Legislative Reapportionment was a result of the impact of the Bureau's ideology on its perception of the political system. The resultant failure of the Farm Bureau President to serve on the Governor's Commission denied that organization access to an important step in the decision-making process concerning legislative reapportionment.

Political conflict is a result of perceived differences between and among political actors. The matter of perception is of distinct importance. The human being who accidentally ventures near a wasp's nest is perceived by the wasp as a threat to his security. The wasp attacks the human, even though the human had no real intention of bothering the wasp or his nest. So too, political conflict often arises or is intensified as a result of distorted perceptions of the political behavior of others or of the political context.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the political problem of legislative reapportionment and the conflicts arising therefrom in the state of Minnesota with particular reference to the effect of perception on the reactions of various political actors. The principal actors focused upon are (1) the Governor's Bipartisan Commission on Legislative Reapportionment and its Advisory Subcommittee and (2) the Minnesota Farm Bureau.

The Minnesota Farm Bureau's idea of a legislature was one composed of two houses, based on population, reflecting urban interests, and one based on area, reflecting rural-agricultural interests. This idea was resoundingly rejected by Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren in *Reynolds* v. *Sims:* "Legislatures represent people, not trees or acres. Legislators are elected by voters, not farms or cities or economic interests. . . . The fact that an individual lives here or there is not a legitimate reason for overweighting or diluting the efficacy of his vote. . . . We hold that, as a basic constitutional standard, the equal protection clause requires that the seats in both houses of a bicameral state legislature must be apportioned on a population basis."

Two events in the summer of 1964 brought the reapportionment conflict to the Minnesota scene. One was the suit brought in federal district court (*Honsey* v. *Donovan*) asking that the Minnesota legislative apportionment law of 1959 be declared invalid on the grounds that it violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The second was Governor Karl Rolvaag's appointment of the Governor's Bipartisan Commission on Legislative Reapportionment. The Commission was to make recommendations to the Governor on legislative reapportionment that he, in turn could submit to the 1965 legislature.

The Chairman of the Governor's Bipartisan Commission on Legislative Reapportionment (GBCLR) was Franklin Rogers, editor of the Mankato *Free Press*. Mr. Rogers asked the author of this paper to form an Advisory Subcommittee of political scientists and other interested experts to perform the roles of (1) providing summarized background information in the form of study papers on subjects related to legislative reapportionment, (2) providing staff assistance to the GBCLR, and (3) informing the public of the problem of reaportionment.

The Governor, in presenting his written mandate to the GBCLR, had indicated that its responsibility was to present proposals for legislative reapportionment within the confines of the U.S. Constitution as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court and the Minnesota Constitution. In his oral mandate to the Commission, the Governor had presented numerous directly related topics that he perceived to be within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Ultimately, most of these topics were treated in study papers by members of the Advisory Subcommittee and submitted to the GBCLR and, finally, in the report to the Governor.

The Governor had correctly perceived the direct relation between many of the orally suggested topics and the central issue of reapportionment, but he had failed to recognize that a citizens' committee, such as the GBCLR, simply could not cope with the complexity of the issues, as outlined orally by the Governor, without governmentally authorized fiscal resources. Having no such funds, the GBCLR was thus dependent upon the voluntary staff assistance of the Advisory Subcommittee.

The GBCLR and the Advisory Subcommittee were perceived by the public as one single entity rather than as a citizens' committee served by a voluntary professional staff. The single entity was not perceived by all actors in the political conflict in the same way.

To the legislature, the GBCLR was perceived as an instrumentality of the Governor and legislative reapportionment itself was perceived as a legislative matter exclusively, and the Governor therefore, should have refrained from interfering in the area. The Governor was

[1] B.S., Mankato State College; M.A. and Ph.D., State University of Iowa. Chairman, Advisory Subcommitte of Political Scientists to the Govrnor's Bipartisan Commission on Legislative Reapportionment, 1964-65. National Center for Education in Politics Fellow at the Republican National Convention, 1964.

Currently, Associate Professor of Political Science, Mankato State College.

unable to persuade any legislator to serve on the GBCLR although, ultimately, two ex-legislators, Peter Popovich and Chris Erickson, did serve on the Commission.

To the Minnesota Farm Bureau, the GBCLR was not politically acceptable. Governor Rolvaag had originally appointed representatives from three major farm organizations in Minnesota to the GBCLR: Clarence W. Myers, President of the Minnesota Farm Bureau; Archie Baumann, Secretary of the Minnesota Farmers Union; and William Pearson, Master of the Minnesota State Grange. No one was appointed to represent the National Farmers Organization, perhaps because the NFO was the first farm organization to clearly recognize the decline in the farmers' political power and to shift its major emphasis from political to economic pressure. The Minnesota Farm Bureau did not take the NFO's position nor did it choose to play a role in the GBCLR.

On August 14, 1964, Minnesota Farm Bureau President Clarence W. Myers sent a letter of resignation to Governor Karl Rolvaag. Myers' resignation from the GBCLR was a decision fraught with conflict. Franklin Rogers, Chairman of the GBCLR, indicated that Myers had expressed a desire to resign on three previous occasions, but each time Rogers had been able to convince Myers of the desirability of Myers' remaining on the Commission. Although it is difficult to specifically locate or trace the exact source of pressure, it seems apparent that there was within the Farm Bureau considerable pressure on Myers to maintain a solid front against the June 15, 1964 Supreme Court decision and any of its resultant political products. This pressure manifested itself in Myers' letter of resignation to the Governor which stated in part, "When I was contacted originally by your office to serve on this Special Commission on Reapportionment, it was my opinion that this commission would give consideration to apportionment along the lines of our Farm Bureau policy, which calls for a state constitutional amendment to provide for an area house as well as a population house in Minnesota. However, in reading the charge to the commission, which directs it to draw up a proposal for reapportionment consistent with our current state constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court decision, I find that I could not make a contribution as it would be in direct conflict with our policy."

Although the position on legislative reapportionment of the Minnesota Farmers Union and the Minnesota State Grange was similar to that of the Farm Bureau, neither of these two farm organizations took the adamant stand of the Farm Bureau in regard to the GBCLR.. Part of this may be a result of the questionable historical analysis of American political theory put forth by Charles B. Shuman, President of the American Farm Bureau Federation, which has affected the perception of political reality by state and local Farm Bureau leaders and members.

Shuman and the Farm Bureau leadership maintain that (1) county and local government bears the same relation to state government as state government does to the national federal government—the so-called federal analogy; (2) the majority is not always right and therefore a check and balance system of one house of the legislature based on area and one house based on population is absolutely imperative to preserve the rights of the rural minority; and (3) the battle is not rural versus urban but a battle to preserve representative government. These three positions, in the view of the Farm Bureau, are the traditional essence of the American political system; any deviation from them is totally new, different, and dangerous.

Although *Reynolds* v. *Sims* is frequently cited by the Farm Bureau leadership in its denunciations of the trend in legislative reapportionment, there has been an unwillingness to acknowledge the brief history of American political theory contained in it that refutes the questionable historical analysis of Shuman and his colleagues. Chief Justice Warren said, "We . . . find the federal analogy inapposite and irrelevant to state legislative districting schemes. Attempted reliance on the federal analogy appears often to be little more than an after-the-fact rationalization offered in defense of maladjusted state apportionment arrangements. The original constitutions of 36 of our States provided that representation in both houses of the state legislature would be based completely, or predominantly, on population. And the Founding Fathers clearly had no intention of establishing a pattern or model for the apportionment of seats in state legislatures when the system of representation in the Federal Congress was adopted. Demonstrative of this is the fact that the Northwest Ordinance adopted in the same year . . . as the Federal Constitution, provided for the apportionment of seats in territorial legislatures solely on the basis of population. . . . Political subdivisions of States—counties, cities, or whatever—never were and never have been considered as sovereign entities. Rather, they have been traditionally regarded as subordinate governmental instrumentalities created by the State to assist in the carrying out of state governmental functions."

The Farm Bureau had a different perception of the American political system than the U.S. Supreme Court. The former perceived the system in terms of the actual apportionment of the state legislatures in the pre-1964 period. This was, in spite of state constitutional instructions to the contrary in many states, a malapportionment that tended to make area a factor in representation.

An excellent example of this perception of political reality by political actors was continually confronted by the GBCLR. In the public hearings conducted by the GBCLR, citizen after citizen, most of whom were from rural areas, testified that they wanted the Minnesota Constitution to *continue* to provide for one legislative house based on area and one legislative house based on population. Judge J. H. Sylvestre, member of the GBCLR, would frequently inquire of these witnesses as to whether they were aware that the Minnesota Constitution provided for both legislative houses to be based on population. The answer was uniformly in the negative.

Because the Minnesota Farm Bureau perceived the U.S. Supreme Court's reapportionment decision as altering the political system of the state, it chose as its politi-

cal strategy in the reapportionment conflict, (1) nonparticipation in the GBCLR and (2) concerted political pressure for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow the citizens of the respective states to decide by referendum whether one house of its state legislature should be based on a factor other than population.

The Minnesota Farm Bureau's strategy was a calculated risk based on the assumption that (1) the GBCLR would not prove to be a significant political force, and, even if it did, that the Farm Bureau through Myers could not produce changes that would conform to the Farm Bureau objectives, and that (2) it was politically possible to successfully amend the U.S. Constitution and the Minnesota Constitution as desired by the Farm Bureau.

The Minnesota Farm Bureau underestimated the political power of the GBCLR. Although the reapportionment measure that may have passed the Minnesota legislature may not be an exact replica of the GBCLR proposal, the GBCLR did have the following effects: (1) It helped to create an increased public awareness of the reapportionment issue and (2) it provided the legislature with certain criteria and information, with the result that the legislature began work on reapportionment earlier than was generally expected and with greater adherence to the criteria than was generally predicted.

Myers' failure to serve on the GBCLR meant that there was no opportunity for the Minnesota Farm Bureau to pressure for recommendations such as weighted voting, which might have been politically advantageous to rural-agricultural interests. The Minnesota Farm Bureau thus excluded itself from an important step in the decision-making process concerning legislative reapportionment.

It remains to be seen whether the Farm Bureau's paramount reliance on constitutional amendments was an advantageous choice in political strategy.

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