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### Legislative Experience, December 8, 1977

Vern Riffe

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SPEECH/DISCUSSION  
LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR  
STARK COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
DECEMBER 8, 1977

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE

1. FORTUNATE TO HAVE SERVED OVER 18 YEARS IN THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2. WHEN A FRESHMAN, I WAS IN THE MAJORITY CAUCUS
3. AFTER THAT TERM, 12 LONG YEARS IN THE MINORITY
4. THEN SPEAKER PRO TEM, SPEAKER IN 1975, REELECTED  
SPEAKER IN 1977
5. THEREFORE, I'VE VIEWED THE LEGISLATURE FROM MANY  
PERSPECTIVES

## II. BODY

### A. ROLE OF THE ELECTED LEGISLATOR

1. DELEGATE ROLE - EACH LEGISLATOR REPRESENTS A DISTRICT, A PARTICULAR CONSTITUENCY

A. IN DELEGATE ROLE, LEGISLATOR VOTES THE WAY HE FEELS THE MAJORITY IN HIS DISTRICT WOULD WANT HIM TO VOTE

2. BURKEAN ROLE (NAMED FOR 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BRITISH POLITICIAN EDMUND BURKE) - LEGISLATOR VOTES HIS CONSCIENCE.

A. HE MAKES DECISIONS BASED PURELY ON HIS PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF WHAT IS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE

3. PARTISAN ROLE - EVERY LEGISLATOR IS AFFILIATED  
WITH A POLITICAL PARTY

A. IN PARTISAN ROLE, LEGISLATOR MAKES DECISIONS  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS PARTY AND ITS IDEOLOGY

4. POLITICO ROLE - COMBINATION OF ABOVE THREE

A. ACTUALLY NO LEGISLATOR FITS NEATLY INTO  
ONE OF THE FIRST THREE ROLES, WE ARE POLITICOS,  
COMBINING THE ROLE OF DELEGATE, BURKEAN,  
PARTISAN

B. MOST OF US SHIFT EMPHASIS FROM ONE ROLE TO  
ANOTHER AS NECESSARY

B. TYPES OF LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

1. STRONG LEADERSHIP

A. DIRECTS LEGISLATIVE BODY FORWARD

- B. SETS POLICIES AND PRIORITIES
- C. STRONG LEADERSHIP DOESN'T MEAN A DICTATORIAL TYPE OF LEADERSHIP; BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT THE LEADER AND HIS ASSISTANTS ARE IN CHARGE, ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITIES, ARE WILLING TO DEFEND/ JUSTIFY THEIR ACTIONS AND DEFEND ACTIONS OF THEIR FOLLOWERS
- D. STRONG LEADERS KNOW HOW TO RUN THE "RAILROAD" THEY KNOW ALL THE ACTIONS OCCURRING

2. WEAK LEADERSHIP

- A. WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE? (THE CHARACTERISTIC FEELING WITHIN A BODY LED BY A WEAK LEADER)
- B. POLICIES AND PRIORITIES BECOME CONFUSED

- c. LEGISLATIVE BODY TYPICALLY RUNS AHEAD OF  
LEADERSHIP, PROBABLY COULD OPERATE AS WELL  
WITHOUT LEADERSHIP
  - d. WEAK LEADERS DON'T LAST LONG
3. CBVIOUSLY, STRONG LEADERSHIP IS PREFERABLE TO  
WEAK LEADERSHIP
- a. LEGISLATURE OPERATES MORE SMOOTHLY
  - b. PUBLIC BENEFITS FROM BETTER ORGANIZED  
REPRESENTATION, BETTER POLICY-MAKING
4. I AM KNOWN AS A STRONG LEADER, BUT THAT SHOULD NOT  
IMPLY THAT I'M RUTHLESS
- a. THE BEST STRONG LEADERS ARE FIRM, BUT FAIR (I AM)
  - b. WHENEVER STRONG LEADERS ARE UNFAIR, THEY RUN THE  
RISK OF BEING CAST ASIDE

C. ROLE OF THE CHAIR

1. THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR IS TO SEE THAT THE  
LEGISLATIVE MEETING IS CONDUCTED FAIRLY, EFFICIENTLY
2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHAIR BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT  
AS THE SIZE OF THE LEGISLATIVE BODY INCREASES
3. THE LARGER THE MEMBERSHIP, THE MORE UNWIELDLY
4. A STRONG LEADER IS ESPECIALLY NEEDED TO CHAIR A  
LARGE LEGISLATIVE BODY

III. CONCLUSION

A. COMMUNICATION IS KEY

1. LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS MUST COMMUNICATE AMONG  
THEMSELVES
2. WITHOUT COMMUNICATION NOTHING WORKS WELL

3. COMMUNICATION SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE OUR CCNSTITUENTS --  
MOST OF THEM WANT TO KNOW ABOUT OUR ACTIONS, MOST  
ARE WILLING TO UNDERSTAND OUR ACTIONS
4. COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE BODY,  
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP