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STATEMENT BY THE CITIZENS LEAGUE
TO THE MINNEAPOLIS CHARTER COMMISSION
AUGUST 8, 1974

The Citizens League has been deeply concerned with, and involved in, the question of governmental organization in the city of Minneapolis since our founding in 1952. We continue to believe today that the successful operation of the central city governments is of absolutely central importance to everyone in the Twin Cities metropolitan area . . . and that a governmental structure in which elected and appointed city officials can work together productively is therefore also a top-priority matter.

What is the problem in city government structure?

It has been our conclusion that there is not some "proper" form of city government organization. Minneapolis is not right or wrong because it conforms, or fails to conform, either to what some textbook says, or to the way in which some other city is organized. It has been our feeling that we have to look quite directly at the job the city government has to perform, and the situation in which this job must be performed . . . and look quite concretely at the ways in which the present system is performing adequately, and the ways in which it is not. Then, changes in structure should be designed to cure the problems we've identified, without creating new problems in the process.

What, then, has to be the present evaluation of the existing Minneapolis city government structure? We will not try to repeat fully here what was said in the major reports the Citizens League published in 1969 and 1970 . . . or in the statement we made to this Commission July 31, 1973. We will only say, briefly, in summary:

1. There is a real problem in developing what we call "policy leadership." This problem rests essentially in the division of responsibilities that has evolved between and among the mayor, the city council president, and the coordinator. Effective policy leadership to us requires that there be brought together, somehow, a responsibility to present proposals; the authority needed to develop the proposals and, once approved, to carry them out; and political accountability to the citywide electorate. These functions, as we all know, are presently divided. The problem has been how to reassemble the pieces . . . and on this no clear consensus has yet appeared.
2. There is a real problem in securing the consent of the governed for the kinds of activities that have to be carried on as this 100-year-old city expands and continues the process of physically rebuilding itself. Our city government was created at a time when the principal jobs were the opening up of new subdivisions on vacant land, the simple housekeeping services to the established single-family neighborhoods, and the operation of some very large facilities serving residents of the suburbs as well as of the city. Today, the city is built; the city government is less and less involved with facilities and programs -- the sewage treatment system, the airport, the jail, the workhouse -- serving beyond the city limits; and is settling down to the very large and complex and difficult job of maintaining, rehabilitating and, in some cases, rebuilding the older areas of the city. For this, a new kind of city government