

Statement by Representative Al Wieser
August 3, 1977

In my three years in the Minnesota Legislature as a DFL State Representative, I was first surprised and then distressed at the conduct of the majority party in state government. Three major themes seemed to reoccur throughout the past few years:

- (1) An increasing centralization and costs in state government.
- (2) The imbalance of one party domination.
- (3) The Independent-Republican Party today is closer to the traditional views of the people in southeastern Minnesota.

Because of these concerns and my commitment to local government and the people of my district, I have decided to join the Independent-Republican Party of Minnesota.

The decision to change parties has not come quickly nor easily. I cannot in good conscience continue to affiliate with the political philosophy and behavior of the majority party. It is clear to me that the majority is taking the state in the wrong direction and without reservation I join the Republican Party. I know that its policies and philosophies are consistent with mine and the majority of people in my district. I'd like to make it clear that there are many good Democrats. They realize that government growth must be controlled and individual liberties must be protected. Unfortunately, they have a smaller and smaller voice in the decision-making process. I do expect that in the future we will see more and more of them aligning themselves with the Independent-Republicans.

Let me discuss briefly the two major concerns that I have had.

The first -- increasing centralization -- has shown itself in many areas. In education, for example, there has been loss of local control. The state legislature has increasingly moved toward greater funding and greater regulation of special programs for local school districts. There have been mandates for very specialized programming without the state funds necessary to implement them. But more important, there has been an increasing number of plans which are forced upon local districts. The freedom of choice of local school districts in setting policies consistent with the wishes of local voters and parents is being steadily diminished.

So, too, there has been indifference to our rural needs in the area of natural resources. Instead of help from state agencies, we find only increasing regulation. The Minnesota DNR has a strong impact on rural areas. Yet farmers and rural citizens find themselves increasingly at odds with an agency that seems dead set on imposing its will from the top. That's not local control; that's not citizen input; and that's not keeping promises to strengthen rural Minnesota.

But the increasing centralization affects not only rural Minnesotans. The phenomenal increase in the state budget affects all of us. It was not until the late 1960's that Minnesota had its first billion dollar budget. For the present biennium our budget will exceed 6.4 billion dollars. Clearly, the growth of state spending has increased far more quickly than inflation. And who pays? The average middle class working family is the one which is being forced to pay the cost of excessive government. It is clear that they have had enough of taxes taking a larger and larger portion of their paycheck while at the same time taking more and more of their freedoms away from them.

I strongly believe we are reaching the upper limits of tolerance of Minnesotans for growth in state government, state spending and state taxes.

The second major concern that I have had is the political imbalance in Minnesota. Let me cite some examples:

Election laws have been designed to keep the majority in power with control of the House and Senate.

The majority has enacted a public financing law which clearly favors itself. DFLers who run for the state legislature receive almost twice as much public money as Republicans. That's distinctly different from the federal public financing which at least splits the pie evenly.

Finally, I believe the mood of the people in our state is changing. I feel the people are telling elected officials to stop and reflect on the multitude of programs passed over the past few years. They are telling us that government by crises is not solving problems but, in too many cases, creating more interference in our personal lives. I believe the people are telling elected officials that big government is no longer the broker between us and other big institutions. Big government has become just another large entity. Nowhere in our state is this feeling stronger than in the district I represent in Southeast Minnesota.

I believe my switch in party allegiance simply mirrors that of many Minnesotans. We are disenchanted with promises unfulfilled and the actions of the majority party. Prospects have never been brighter for a strong resurgence of the Independent-Republican Party in our state.

I believe that in 1978 we will see the election of many Independent-Republicans to statewide office and substantial gains in the Minnesota House.