

How is Tripartisan Government Working?

Good afternoon.

I'd like to read you a quote from a book:

"The two party system has given this country the war of Lyndon Johnson, the Watergate of Nixon, and the incompetence of Carter. Saying we should keep the two party system because it is working is like saying the Titanic voyage was a success because a few people survived on life rafts."

The person who said that is quite out spoken, known to ruffle the feathers of conventional politicians, and could not care less if he offends anyone with his opinions. The media loves him because he's always good for a provocative quote, he's an author of more than one book, and lately he's taken to writing poetry.

The person who made that very provocative statement is Eugene J. McCarthy. The book that contains this quote was written by another unconventional politician who could not care less if he offends anyone with his opinions and whose quotes are sought after by the media.

The book is *Do I stand Alone?* and the author is Jesse Ventura. You have asked me to come here today to talk about tripartisan government.

You ask: Is it working?

Well, first of all I think it is safe to say that it sure isn't any worse than what we had before I was elected.

And if you don't believe that just ask Gene McCarthy. Seriously though, I think that the honest answer to that question is that there is ample evidence that tripartisan government is working.

I'll talk about that evidence but first let me address something that I know someone in the crowd will bring up.

Someone will say this experiment with tripartisan government in Minnesota is not a true test because it is more of a Jesse Ventura phenomenon than a third party, a third way of governing.

Someone will say that Jesse Ventura and his celebrity status skews the landscape and that a more conventional political personality wouldn't have been elected or had the impact that I am having.

Well, to that I say baloney. The fact is you cannot separate the two. Jesse Ventura was the candidate of a legitimate third party.

Whatever you think of Ross Perot's persona, he was a presidential candidate of a legitimate third party and in 1992 he received 19 % of the country's popular vote.

And more importantly, he brought the issue of deficit spending to the table and caused the Democrats and Republicans to take the issue seriously and do something about it.

While some may say that Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura are aberrations, I don't believe so. I think that the people are looking for more diversity in leadership styles.

They are looking for something beyond the same old Democrats and Republicans.

Fundamentally, the people are looking for more choices.

More genuine leaders that aren't climbing the political ladder from elected office to elected office.

It is in this environment that Ross Perot got one out of every five votes cast in the 1992 presidential election.

It is in this environment that the state of Maine elected an independent governor two years later.

And it was in this environment that I was elected governor of Minnesota in 1998.

But without the party I could not have done it.

If it wasn't for the Dean Barkleys, Phil Madsens, Diane Goldmans and thousands of others in the early stages of the Reform Party we would not be here talking about whether tripartisan government is working.

And so, is it working?

Of course it's working.

The signs are obvious and go beyond Minnesota.

First, there are signs that, in general, more people than usual are interested in Minnesota government.

People who haven't paid attention to government in the past, now do pay attention, and that's a good thing.

That more people are voting is a good sign.

As I said earlier, Minnesota is not the only state with tripartisan government. Maine, even before Minnesota, has an independent governor. And I don't think it is a coincidence.

These are two very progressive states, with an independent nature, who consistently lead the nation in voter turnout

It is in this kind of environment that tripartisan government can and does work.

I don't know about you, but since I became governor I haven't noticed that our state's stature among other states has been reduced.

Think back.

Can you think of the last time that a Minnesota governor was invited to spend a day with Harvard University economists and then to speak to the Kennedy School of Government?

Can you think of the last time a Minnesota governor was asked to lecture at the Nixon Library, Georgetown University, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Carleton, the Navel Academy and West Point?

Can you think of the last time a Minnesota governor was invited to spend the night at the White House with a President that was not of his party?

Can you think of the last time a Minnesota governor was asked to advise the President-elect of another party on world trade?

Can you think of the last time a Minnesota governor was elected with 37% of the vote but has had job approval ratings consistently in the 70% range?

Is tripartisan government working?

Let me ask you to think about the executive branch of Minnesota's government since I was elected to office.

Name the last governor of Minnesota who upon selecting his cabinet had his Democratic opponent say that it is the most talented cabinet in Minnesota history.

If I recall correctly the legislature, and specifically Senator Randy Kelly, has been saying for years that we need to do something about the high cost of our prison system.

This year, one of those very talented cabinet members, Commissioner Sheryl Ramstad Hvass is doing something about the high cost of prisons and has instituted a plan to lower the per diem cost in Minnesota prisons.

Is it working? Ask Randy Kelly. And he'll tell you that when it comes to prison management it is.

How about applying that talent to fiscal responsibility?

Under the direction of Finance Commissioner Pam Wheelock we put together, and the legislature passed, a budget that is structurally balanced. That is, our budgets do not commit the state of Minnesota to spending that cannot be supported four years into the future.

That has never been done before.

Is it working? Ask the leading bond houses in New York. They'll tell you that when it comes to fiscal management, it is.

Tomorrow we are going to break ground for the first light rail system in Minnesota.
In the last two years we have reduced taxes in Minnesota by over \$2 billion dollars.
In the last two years we have sent sales tax rebates back to citizens that amounted to almost \$2 billion dollars.

In the last two years tourism in Minnesota has increased and is now a \$10 billion dollar industry.

Maybe some would say the measurement should be about ideas.

Ideas like a more accountable and efficient legislative process.

Ideas like long-term funding for a multi-modal transportation system.

Ideas like cutting edge tax reform that would adapt our tax system to the new economy.

Ideas like reforming the way we pay teachers.

Idea's like health care for all children.

If ideas were the measure, I would say it's working.

How about the fact that the governor in this tripartisan government hasn't had a fundraiser since he was sworn into office?

Would that be a measure of how it is working?

How about the fact that we have had two very successful legislative sessions and no special sessions?

There's no gridlock.

There's no panic.

So why then are we asking the question?

I think we are asking the question because the people clearly want something different than what they are getting from the two party system.

They want more candidates to chose from.

They want more policy choices.

They want citizens to serve as their elected officials, not career politicians.

I was elected governor because the people were looking for something more than the same old bipartisan fixes.

The people are watching this experiment because they want an end to short term fixes of long term problems.

The people are filled with hope that this tripartisan government can achieve solutions that don't rely on short-term fixes targeted toward favored constituencies of the party in power.

The people sent us a message that the bipartisan system wasn't working.

They said, "Try it this way".

We owe it to the people to make good on their challenge.

I hope that when you have finished your discussion today that you will agree that while we surely can, and will do better, tripartisan government is working.

Thank You.