

A little less than two years ago the People of Minnesota elected me their governor.

Many political insiders, editorial page writers and the academic elite in Minnesota and the nation shook their heads in disbelief and ask themselves how the heck my election could have happened.

Amazingly, two years later, democratic and republican insiders, the media and much of the academic world are still scratching their heads, wondering how it happened, and if it could happen again.

Keep reading. I tell you how it happened in Minnesota and how it could happen again.

The Election

It happened because the people of Minnesota were sick and tired of listening to the same old traditional singsong political talk that the Democrats and the Republicans give them year after year, election after election.

Minnesotans, like the character in the movie *Network*, said "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore."

It happened because middle class, middle-of -the-road, centrists rose up and said to heck with the radical liberals to the left and the radical conservatives on the right.

It happened because sixty percent of the electorate in Minnesota does not strongly identify with either major party. They are independent thinkers.

It happened because a third Minnesota party obtained major-party status in the 1994 election when a candidate for the U.S. Senate got 5% of the vote.

That made it easy for me to get on the general election ballot in 1998, make it a three-way race, and qualify for public campaign financing.

It happened because Minnesota 's election laws allow same day registration.

Did you know that 15.8 percent of Minnesotans registered on Election Day with the overwhelming number casting their ballots for me?

And that fully one voter in eight admitted to voting only because I was on the ballot. Independent-thinking voters made their move in Minnesota.

You other states better be looking over your shoulder because I don't think this independent movement is done yet.

Especially if the congress and state legislators get smart, provide easy access for voting, and public financing for campaigns in all the states.

In 1998, when I was elected, 61.4 of Minnesota's eligible voters went to the polls.

This compares to the national average of 36% for the same year.

It is interesting that year in and year out Minnesota and Maine generally lead the nation for voter turnout. Is it a coincidence that Minnesota and Maine are the only states with independent Governors?

All these things help but you also have to have a candidate who believes in candor and not pander.

The Debates

And of course that reminds me of debates. Have you been watching the presidential debates?

Unlike the presidential debates going on right now, in my election in Minnesota, even though I was a third party candidate, I was allowed to debate.

In fact, before the debates I was polling less than ten percent. But once allowed to debate my numbers started to climb, and the rest is history.

Let's face it, the Democrats and the Republicans are operating like they don't have a clue what democracy is all about. To them democracy is to make it hard to vote, limit choices and only campaign on issues that appeal to special interest groups that can deliver votes.

I don't know about you but I am finding this year's debates very boring.

When I debated in my campaign I stood next to the two traditional candidates, smiled, and said; 'If you like what they represent, fine, vote for them. If you want honest and principled leadership then vote for me.

And I never used notes.

In one of the televised debates my opponents Hubert H. Humphrey, III and St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman came with stacks of notebooks filled with research.

After the debate had started a woman from the League of Women voters thought she was doing a nice thing for me by handing me a yellow legal pad and a pencil.

She whispered to me, 'you'll probably need this.'

I handed her back the pencil and paper and said ‘no thank you ma’am’. You see if you speak from the heart and tell the truth you don’t need a long memory.’

It seems to me that one of the most important things to look for in a debate is whether the candidate is real. Are the thoughts and ideas coming from their hearts, or from a carefully calculated political strategy developed by a campaign consultant?

I think I was successful in my debates because I was authentic and not programmed. There is one presidential debate remaining—and if I were you I would look for authenticity. If you don’t see it and feel it—check out the third party candidates.

Citizen Representation

The other thing is I won because I didn’t spend a lifetime running for the job. I came from the private sector and when this is over I’ll go back to the private sector.

I think that’s the way the people want it.

If you spend a lifetime pandering to the 15% on the radical left and right, well good luck, because the 70% in the middle are going to send you packing.

Then of course you won’t have a clue what to do with your life because all you’ve ever been is a politician.

So then what?

You go to work for a special interest.

Money & Politics

Let’s talk about special interests, lobbyists and money.

When I became Governor many in the press and all the lobbyists shook their heads and said well, he got elected but he sure as heck can’t govern.

I think the lobbyists were upset because they gave all their money to the losers and I wouldn’t take any of their money.

Just think, I won an election, have been governing for almost two years, and I haven’t taken a dime from a special interest group.

Washington politicians ought to try it. It’s not only fun--it works.

Of course, a lot of people who like the traditional system of pandering and fund raising are out there just waiting for me to fail.

I hate to disappoint them, but I will not fail.

You know why?

Because when I stood in front of the student body in a high school in St. Cloud, Minnesota last week, I was looking at the potential of our state. I said to them:

'People can criticize my dress or criticize my style, but rest assured—I will govern and I will not fail.'

I will not fail because I am not torn by allegiances to special interest groups that give me thousand of dollars. I will not fail because I am free to do the right thing and not the politically correct thing. I will not fail because I have a smart hard working cabinet and together we can seek bold reforms and not worry about the political fallout.

I will not fail because if I am not re-elected I will go back to the private sector and not miss a wink of sleep.

Choosing a Candidate

Because this year's elections are close, more than ever, your vote can make a difference. Starting today you should engage and begin choosing your candidate,

And remember, there are no wasted votes.

Also remember what they said in Minnesota during my election: "a vote for Jesse Ventura is a wasted vote."

Well, I wasted the democrat and republican with "wasted votes."

Voting is a privilege and your responsibility is to vote your heart and conscience. Elections are not horse races. Be true to your convictions and your principle, and you may be surprised at the results.

I could spell out the issues and tell you whom I think you should vote for. But I'm not going to do that. You can study the issues on your own.

My advice to you is this:

Look for a candidate who pays attention to common ordinary folks who pay the bills and don't want hassles in their lives.

Life can be a struggle sometimes and the last thing we need is a candidate who wants the government to be a bigger part of our lives.

We need a president who believes in accountable, responsive and limited Government.

I always say: "Love is bigger than government" so let's just stay the heck out of the way of people and let them live their lives.

I think personal responsibility and opportunities for self-sufficiency should be high on the list of the presidential candidate you vote for.

People must make smart decisions. And if they make a mistake, well I'm sorry, but it's not government's job to make up for every dumb mistake a person makes.

You can't legislate against stupidity.

And let's vote for candidates who will bring Government back to the people.

I love the people.

But I just don't understand why most elected officials don't get it. They go out there and try to involve people in the oldest and dumbest ways you can think of.

In Minnesota last year the Republicans and Democrats went through the same old stuff. Pander to the left, pander to the right, kiss to up the special interests and lobbyists and then try to tell us that it's a "grass roots campaign."

What a bunch of baloney.

I'm telling you, if candidates go out there and spend all their time with the radical left and the radical right, given a choice, 70% of the people will just sit on their hands and not get involved.

Sadly I think that is where we find our country today.

But you have the power to change it all. It will take time. And you will have to vote your heart and your conscience.

Think about it. You may be surprised with the result.