

W. D. A. F. Sunday afternoon, 3:15, April 16, 1939

Just eighty hours ago I issued a statement to the Kansas City newspapers, in which I said, "Kansas City is clean now and it is going to stay clean. Under our present city charter the powers of the mayor are limited legally to the extent that he virtually is only the presiding officer of the City Council. During the time I have served as mayor I have abided by the limitations placed upon the office by the charter, and within those narrow limits I have tried sincerely to serve the people of Kansas City to the best of my ability. At the present time, however, I believe the people of Kansas City expect that their mayor should be more than simply the presiding officer of the Council. Believing that, I have decided that for the remainder of my term I shall step beyond the limitations placed upon me by the charter, and that when necessary I shall take an active part in the administration of the affairs of our municipal government, with my sole purpose a determination that this city shall be all that its citizens desire, and all that I intend for it to be. In this position I believe that I am supported by the City Council and it is my hope I shall have the support of all our citizens."

Since that time events have come thick and fast - have piled up so rapidly, in fact, that today none of us has had the opportunity to draw a deep breath and view the situation abstractly. We have, however, taken definite steps in the right direction and we have only begun to follow the course that we have set for ourselves. I want to say, here and now, that in issuing my statement last Thursday morning I acted purely upon my own initiative, without outside advise, and the only person who had definite knowledge of my decision prior to the time the statement was issued, was my secretary. I am proud to say, however, that in my stand for a clean city I have the one hundred per cent support and backing of the City Council. We stand today, and when I say WE I mean the nine members of the City Council, as a unified body, willing and eager to take the leadership in this movement to make Kansas City clean and to give to the people of this community a city of which they can be genuinely proud.

Briefly, I would like to review for you the events of the past eighty hours. The city manager tendered his resignation, it was accepted by the council, and a new acting city manager was named. In fairness to Judge McElroy, I do want to say that he did many splendid things for Kansas City during the years he was city manager.

Another step has been the resignation of the Director of Police and the appointment of a new Acting Director. The third step has been the issuance of orders to that director to clean up the town and keep it clean, and to continue the safety campaign even more vigorously than before.

While we have a definite program in mind in our efforts to keep Kansas City clean and put it on an absolutely sound basis, it is too early to say exactly just what definite steps must be taken to achieve our goal. Rather we must chart our course as we proceed, taking one step and then determining after it is taken what the next one should be. I promise you, however, that we do not plan a devious route to reach our goal but that it is our intention to achieve it as quickly as possible. There are a few steps already planned which I am in a position to discuss with you today.

First, is the matter of the city's finances. The credit of our municipality is not impaired and our securities have been, and will continue to be, marketed at extremely low rates of interest. On April 30th, however, we will close our fiscal year with a deficit. That will not happen again. That situation presents us with two problems and both of them must be met immediately. First of them is to find the necessary means of wiping out the deficit that is facing us for the current fiscal year. The second, and far more important, is to take those steps that are necessary to make certain that a deficit will not occur again. There is just one way to bring that about. It is to cut our expenditures to the point where they will be within our income. In order to do that it will be necessary to reduce our payrolls and our expenditures for other purposes.

The discharge of employees is not a pleasant duty, but in this situation that task confronts us. Every drone and every unneeded worker must be dropped. Expenses must be cut to the point where they will fall below our income. Let me assure you, however, that we have no intention of curtailing any necessary or vital service that the city now is rendering to the taxpayers. In this procedure it will be necessary to move rapidly and yet we must move cautiously, because, unless such a course is necessary from a financial standpoint, we have no desire to remove from the payrolls any person who is giving full service to the city. The payrolls must be cut so that those who remain will be assured their full salaries.

I have called for tomorrow morning the first of the conferences with city officials that

will be necessary to bring about the needed financial readjustment of the city's affairs.

We will not delay one day in taking whatever steps are necessary to put Kansas City on a sound financial basis.

Second of our immediate problems is the Police Department. We have placed at its helm a trained and efficient police officer in whom the Council and the Acting City Manager have complete confidence. He has been given full rein in the operation of the department and his only instructions are to enforce all of the laws impartially and to clean up the town and keep it clean. Undoubtedly, there will be some shifting and some changes in the personnel of the department. What they may be I am not prepared to say at this time because we do not know ourselves. It will suffice to say that it is our sincere desire to give to Kansas City a police department one hundred per cent efficient and we are taking now the steps necessary to make that desire a reality. A highly trained, perfectly functioning and completely efficient police department is one of the most important arms of any city government. We are going to have such a department.

Another problem so pressing that we feel it must be taken up within the next few days is the matter of restoring the confidence of business and industry in Kansas City. Some months ago I offered to take the active leadership in a campaign for the business and industrial development of Kansas City. At that time I issued a statement in which I referred to charges that had been made that the city administration was stifling and intimidating business and industry, was driving business from the city and was keeping new business and industry from coming here. I said at that time that if those charges were true the vicious practices that had been hinted at must be stopped. I repeat that assertion now, and I hereby pledge that any and all such practices which may have existed in the past must be stopped and will be stopped. At the time I issued that original statement I appointed a committee of business men to investigate the charges that had been made. For some reason that committee did not function. At this time it is my earnest desire that this group, should reorganize, carry out the task which was assigned to it and take the leadership in formulating a plan for the industrial and business development of Kansas City. To the committee I pledge the wholehearted and unqualified support of the city administration. Kansas City must go forward.

Many other problems equally important and equally pressing now confront and will

confront your city administration in the next few weeks. Let me assure you that your mayor, and your city City Council intend to meet than squarely and to solve them. We are absolutely sincere in our declaration that Kansas City must be clean and must stay clean and that our house must be put in order. Briefly, we mean business and we believe that the vast majority of people of this community will back us in our efforts. I thank you.