

COMPTROLLER FILE No.

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JUNE 1989 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH by
Mayor, Charles Royer

REPORT OF COMM

Honorable President:

Your

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would respectfully report that we have considered the same and resp. both fully

Filed June 19, 1989 Howard Brooks, City Comptroller

Margaret Carter Deputy

ACTION OF THE COUNCIL

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1989 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH

June 19, 1989

Mr. President, honorable members of the City Council,
fellow citizens.

The City Charter requires the Mayor to report to you
in June of each year on the State of the City. In 1978,
I found myself in unique circumstances as a brand new Mayor
and didn't give a speech. In 1989, I find myself again in
a unique position. As a three-term Mayor retiring, I intend
to make a different kind of report to you.

It will not be a farewell speech. It's too soon for
that. We have six months left and a lot left to do.

Nor will it be a listing of accomplishments. We have
worked hard and well together for a long time. We know our
successes, and we are certain of their value.

We are, I think, less certain of the future -- less
confident that in quickly changing circumstances we can
handle the problems and the opportunities ahead of us.

So this speech will be about the future. It is inspired
by our shared experience, our past achievements and the
lessons we have learned from our mistakes. It is aimed
directly at the great opportunity of a new election, a new
Mayor, and a new decade.

1989 STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH
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STATE OF CITY GOVERNMENT: MOMENTUM FOR THE FUTURE

In 1990, the new Mayor will begin a fresh decade with a City government in sound financial condition. Through hard work we have built solid cash reserves, adopted sound financial policies, and balanced demands on our resources. As a result, Seattle's bond rating stands at its highest level in 20 years.

Our utilities are now on a strong, independent footing; the conservation ethic in water, electricity, and solid waste has been firmly established. We have overcome decades of neglect in the maintenance of City facilities. We have asked the voters to raise taxes to keep the City moving forward, and they responded.

We are the nation's leader in building low income housing. We are the model for other cities in promoting the arts. We have one of the top Police Departments in the country. And we have shown the nation how to build partnerships to confront the most difficult issues of our times:

- o Partnerships with nonprofit agencies who provide health care, child care, low income housing, and human services;

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- o With our public school system to help children at risk;
- o With business to promote economic development and job training;
- o With sister cities to increase international understanding; and
- o With citizens to fight crime and improve neighborhoods.

These strong partnerships and the record of their accomplishments gives the new Mayor and Council a running start on the next decade. The new Mayor will take charge of a City work force that is stronger than ever before.

The new Mayor will learn, as I did, that City government's primary strength is its employees. We have excellent, inspired managers. The value of our investments in our people is evident everywhere -- in Engineering, City Light, Planning, Administrative Services, the upstart new Office of Neighborhoods, and in a Police Department that not only reflects the diverse city it serves, but consistently wins the community's respect and support. Our people -- managerial, professional, technical, skilled laborers, and clerical -- are the real strength of this government. They are the mind, muscle, and experience for the hard work ahead. Business Month recently honored Seattle as one of

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the ten best managed city governments in America. The credit should go to our workers.

So as we enter the 90's, the State of the City is sound. But where will we be a decade from now? What issues will determine the character of our City then? And how can we -- who have learned the lessons of the recent past -- sharpen and focus the campaign debate?

Changing Conditions: A Perspective on the Future

The 1990's will be about change -- substantial change for Seattle and the region -- much of it driven by influences external to Seattle.

First, Seattle will be a smaller actor on an ever more crowded stage.

Our next leaders will have to represent Seattle in regional forums and at the State level with a declining share of population and political power.

When I took office in 1978, Seattle represented nearly 45 percent of the County's population. By the year 2000, Seattle's population will be just 30 percent. When redistricting occurs after 1990, Seattle will lose a legislative district and comprise a smaller share of our two congressional districts.

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Second, the "new federalism" of the 70's and 80's is becoming the "new statism" of the 90's.

During the past decade, the federal government has all but disappeared as an effective partner in providing public services. As they delegated more responsibility to state and local government, they failed to provide matching resources -- they passed the buck without any bucks. Today, the State is playing the same game. Burdened with an inadequate and inequitable tax system, the State is pushing more responsibility down to cities and counties without the money to meet the growing demands. Local government has exhausted its general taxing authority, yet we are asked -- sometimes forced -- to shoulder more responsibility -- from solving the drug problem to improving transportation; from dealing with chronic alcoholics cut off by the State's ADATSA program to caring for homeless families when State public assistance will not cover the cost of decent shelter. Ironically, the State justifies this policy in part by pointing to the strength of our local economy. Yet, the State reaps the greatest tax bounty of that harvest, while local government must struggle with the impacts of economic growth.

Third, the Seattle area will continue to grow.

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The renowned research facilities of the University of Washington; our location and port facilities for trade with the Pacific Rim; the strength of Boeing and new high tech companies; and the spectacular quality of our natural environment -- all act as powerful magnets for growth.

Growth means new demands -- childcare centers, jail space, low income housing. Growth means new costs -- roads, sewers, and utility systems. Managing growth requires a regional vision. Our sights must extend beyond our own backyards and our City borders. Fair share, equity, compromise, and tolerance must be our watchwords. Cities and towns across the County will have to take their share of public facilities like jails. The cost of growth must be spread fairly to new neighbors and future residents. And Seattle must shoulder its share of the burdens as well as the benefits of growth -- new housing opportunities along with new jobs. Our dilemma is to be a player on a larger stage with a broader vision.

Fourth, today our people feel less secure on the streets and in their homes.

Even though crime is down 5 percent for the first quarter of 1989, and violent crime is comparatively low, many people believe they are less safe. At the center of

this fear is the new and menacing threat posed by drugs, gangs, and random violence. The networks and the newspapers remind us daily that this danger extends across our nation and across our borders; and, we wonder what difference we can make. When I came into office, the words crack and rock house were not even part of our vocabulary. The lightning changes in the nature of crime have created a major challenge to our City's character and security, and they must be confronted.

Fifth, our Seattle Public School System is critical to our future, but it is in a precarious position as it faces change.

When I took office in 1978, there were nearly 60,000 kids in the Seattle Public Schools. Next year there will be about 43,000. While State funding declines in proportion to enrollment, the needs of the children in our public schools grow more intense and complex. As our teachers work tirelessly to educate our children on an equal footing, they must struggle with changing social conditions -- with teenage pregnancy, with homeless children, and with the impacts of drug and alcohol abuse. Nothing is more central to the long term health of this city than it's public school system, yet we are not giving it the attention and support it desperately requires.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

These are the changing conditions that will drive City policy in the 90's.

The challenges are clear:

- o We must adapt the thinking in City government to our changing role in the region;
- o We must manage and control growth so it works for all;
- o We must escalate the battle against violent crime; and
- o We must invest more energy and more resources in the future of our children.

In my former life, I was a reporter. It was my job to ask questions. I learned that the best questions are those with no simple answers -- the ones that excite passionate debate about values and force people to think about the future.

So, this is not a speech about answers. It is about questions. Questions for the candidates, for the new Mayor, and for those citizens who share our vision of a city in charge of change. A city willing to examine itself in order to find the future.

How can we adapt our thinking in City government to our
changing role in the region and State?

While the City will have a smaller piece of the region's population, it need not be a lesser force. Indeed, Seattle's quality depends on Seattle becoming a stronger, more effective, more sharing player in regional and state forums. In short, we must exert more influence and share more power. It is time for our own perestroika. It is time to rethink and retool the means of governance. We must ask ourselves and those who want to lead:

- o Which decisions should be made regionally?
- o How should Seattle's interests be represented in a new regional governing structure?
- o How would you restructure Metro, the County, or the Council of Governments to be true regional decision-making bodies?

We will need to hold all our elected officials accountable for vigorously representing Seattle's interest while understanding there are other interests our city can help to serve. Through sheer tenacity we must build a partnership with State government that recognizes the concentration of need among the poor in the central cities,

as well as the special, equally unacceptable, circumstances of the poor in rural communities. Local governments with severely limited taxing authority simply cannot be the primary source for quality public services. To build our State's future, we must have a solid foundation. We cannot meet the challenge of the twenty-first century with a tax system devised in the nineteenth. It is time for tax reform. So we must ask the candidates:

- o What tax system do you favor? and
- o What will you do to break the impasse on tax reform?

How can we manage growth, and use its benefits more equitably?

In 1977, when the City adopted its Growth Policies, we agreed on a vision for Seattle. We agreed that our city should be the preeminent center of economic and cultural activities in the region. We agreed on the need to preserve the green and blue of our natural environment and to maintain strong family neighborhoods. We agreed that we wanted to provide the opportunity for more people to live in Seattle, and to be a city of opportunity for all, regardless of income. In many ways we have succeeded in achieving that vision. But, the time is ripe for us to look in the mirror, to take stock of changes around us, and renew our vision.

We must ask:

- o What kind of City do we want to become? What is our vision of Seattle -- in a national and international role, in the regional economy, and for our neighborhoods?
- o How will we build a new political consensus -- around common purposes and values to guide us into the twenty-first century?

Those who would lead us must listen carefully to the dreams of the people and adapt to the City's changing roles.

How do we balance economic growth and our quality of life?

We know that our people want growth management to be the top priority for Seattle in this new era of regional action. We must lead the search for balance. We must find new ways. Where the benefits of a strong economy and new job opportunities are wisely and fairly distributed and reinvested so that the costs of growth -- i.e. sprawl, traffic congestion, and changes in neighborhood character -- are reduced.

Each one of us confronts one of the symptoms of growth every day as we sit in traffic. We are all frustrated by the congestion, and we need to decide what to do about it.

On an advisory ballot in 1988, citizens throughout the County overwhelmingly indicated their support for a light rail system. We all say we believe in mass transit, but too many of us continue to be married to our cars. While forty (40) percent of people coming to Downtown Seattle ride transit, only 5 percent of the trips to Bellevue are on the bus.

We know a rail system will make financial sense only if it can serve high density neighborhoods and commercial centers. Yet the politics of growth force us towards lower densities in our business and residential areas. If we don't want to pave over King County from the Sound to the mountains, we must resolve these contradictions. Our decisions about transportation may be the most important tool we have to manage growth and prevent the green of King County from giving way to the gray of Los Angeles.

So we must ask ourselves and our candidates tough questions:

- o How can we direct our transportation spending to prevent sprawl?
- o Can we afford a rail system, and how do we pay for it?
Where should it go first?

- o How can we get more workers out of their cars and onto transit?

Traffic congestion may be the most apparent symptom of growth, but the most frightening reality is what it does to housing costs. When the cost of housing increases and housing availability decreases, low and middle income people pay the price in job opportunity and cost of living. It is a trend that could change the character of our city from a place of opportunity for all to a city in which only the very rich can afford to buy housing.

Younger families -- the largest group of first-time home buyers -- are being priced out of the market in Seattle. Today the average sales price of a house in Seattle is \$114,500. To qualify for a bank loan, a family would need a minimum income of \$43,000. But the median income for a Seattle family of three is less than \$36,000. So the average young family is about Seventy-five hundred dollars short of having the money to buy a home.

The outlook for renters is even worse. For low and moderate income families, the dilemma is rental housing versus no housing, with ownership simply beyond their grasp. In 1970, the average Seattle apartment consumed 17 percent of wages for median income families -- today that family

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spends 32 percent of its income on rent. And lower income households are spending 40 percent or more of their income on rent.

Our community has done more to improve housing opportunity than any other city in America, but we are still at risk of losing the battle. Our ability to work with the private sector to subsidize and replace affordable housing has been curtailed by the courts and the legislature. And our own policy choices will increase this gap as we downzone neighborhoods and reduce the potential supply of new housing.

Affordable housing will be the hallmark economic issue of the 1990's; not just for low income people, but for moderate income families as well; not just in this city, but throughout the region. We must ask ourselves and our candidates these questions:

- o How will you get the private sector to help provide and preserve low and moderate income housing?
- o How will you balance the need for a greater supply of housing with the demand for downzones in neighborhoods across the region?

- o What new strategies can we use to bring the dream of home ownership within the grasp of young families and the middle class?

The third critical challenge of growth is the threat it holds for the natural environment. The spectacular quality of our environment is our most precious possession. Our strategy to manage growth must protect the remaining natural areas of our County as if they were our collective legacy for the future.

The taxpayers of our City and County have spent millions of dollars to preserve farmlands, to expand parks, and to clean our rivers and lakes. Both governments, and many suburban cities, have adopted Comprehensive Plans that try to protect greenbelts, natural areas, and farmlands by focusing growth in the right places.

The County's Comprehensive Plan is a good one, but it hasn't been enforced. The City has pushed the limits of open space preservation by regulation and has been struck down in the courts. Now our citizens and our staff have designed and you have approved an Open Space Bond Proposal that when approved by the voters will preserve many of the best natural lands for future generations. And, our proposed policies for the Cedar River Watershed are themselves a watershed for environmental preservation.

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The outcome of these environmental issues will play a key role in determining whether we can keep growth from devouring our quality of life. We must ask the candidates:

- o Where do you stand on the Open Space Bond Issue; on the Cedar River Watershed policies; and on the strategy of using open space to manage regional growth?
- o How can the vision of the County's Comprehensive Plan be translated into action? What role can the City play?
- o What role can individuals and private businesses play in preserving the environment, and how will the City help?

How can we escalate the war against crime?

While growth management is a preeminent regional responsibility, the City government's most basic mission is to defend the safety of our community and restore a sense of security among our citizens. The fear of violent crime is real. We must respond to that fear itself, as well as reduce the crime rates.

You and I have made public safety our highest priority. We have increased police resources in the last 12 years -- from \$25 million a year to more than \$75 million a year. We have also been creative in the use of those resources. We started innovative community programs as far back as

1973, when the Block Watch Program began. We have expanded walking beats and bike patrols; invested in modern technology; and established special forces to attack drug and gang problems. We have mobilized other City departments to play new roles in crime prevention -- from graffiti removal to crack house abatement; from recreation programs to alcohol and drug education in the schools.

Recently we asked the experts to tell us how we are doing. They generally gave us high praise for what we are doing, and said to do more. We can do more and we will, but we can't do it alone. We have no control over key parts of the criminal justice system -- the Superior Courts, the jails, the prison system. The next administration will face difficult challenges: to ensure enough jail facilities so hard core criminals do hard time; to build on our teamwork with neighborhoods; and to give our youth good alternatives to the allure of drugs and alcohol.

But the challenge is national as well as local. The flood of drugs coming across our borders must be stopped. The Reagan administration failed and the Bush administration has yet to face up to the dimensions of this national scandal. In cities throughout America, we are paying the price for that failure. In Seattle, narcotics caseloads have climbed from 100 cases in 1985 to more than 1,200 in

1988. The value of drug seizures has increased from \$7.5 million in 1985 to more than \$28 million last year. Neighborhood crime prevention, drug education programs, and local investments in more police will be of little help unless the federal government wages a real war on drugs at the borders.

City and suburban police are doing their job; they are arresting criminals at an unprecedented rate. Arrests by the Seattle Police for major crimes are up almost 50 percent today compared to 1978. And the rise in crime in King County jurisdictions outstrips that of Seattle. But our criminal justice facilities are inadequate. There are not enough jails, courtrooms, and alternative detention facilities to handle those our police arrest.

If the efforts of our citizens and police are to mean anything, we must ensure there are real penalties for criminal behavior and those penalties must be swift. We cannot afford the cynicism that results when police arrest violent criminals or drug peddlers only to find them back on the streets before the police can finish the paperwork on the arrest.

Nor can we afford any more criminal justice facilities in Seattle's fragile neighborhoods. Seattle has 90 percent

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of the jail beds in this County. We've done our share. It's time to build additional jails, courts, and work release facilities. So we must ask the candidates at all levels of local government:

- o What is your strategy for eliminating the log jams in the criminal justice system?
- o How will you ensure that communities throughout the County accept their fair share of jails, work release, and probation facilities?
- o What reforms should judges and court personnel make to improve the chances that serious criminals will do serious time?

As important as improving the criminal justice system's response to crime is the need to improve and expand the citizen and neighborhood response -- surely our brightest hope in fighting crime and overcoming a dangerous sense of powerlessness.

For the first time in five years, Seattle experienced a slight decrease in major crimes last year. Our South Precinct, aided by a strong citizen coalition, led the way. Violent crimes and crimes against property decreased by 7 percent in the South Precinct from 1987-88, compared to

a decline of .5 percent for the City as a whole. In the words of our police management consultant, "Clearly, benefits from the South Precinct community partnership program can be seen in this comparison ... in the Study Team's judgment, the program is the major reason for the reduction" in crime in the South Precinct.

Community strategies like block watches, business watches, park watches, graffiti paint-outs, and community hotlines can and do work. But an all-out effort by committed citizens, open communication between the community and the police, and supportive actions by other City agencies will be needed to win the battle to restore the sense of security within our neighborhoods.

So we ask of ourselves and our candidates:

- o What are your strategies for expanding community involvement in crime prevention?
- o How will you bring our police closer to the community and make the community's participation more effective?
- o How will you mobilize all the resources and expertise of City departments to help in the fight against crime?

We don't need to look at statistics to know that the face of crime has changed. The greatest victims today are

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young adults and children. The allure and profitability of drugs for our kids is a formidable enemy.

The research is frightening: more than half of the 10th graders surveyed in King County say they currently use alcohol or drugs. Access to drugs and the lifestyles that feed addiction are an every day fact of our children's lives. And those who think it is only a Seattle problem are kidding themselves.

We need to ask businesses, community agencies, our schools, and our candidates for local office:

- o What new investments will you make to ensure job opportunities and constructive activities for youth?
- o How will you strengthen drug and alcohol treatment programs to save the kids who have become abusers and those who must live with parents who abuse alcohol and drugs?
- o How can we get our youth involved in crime and drug abuse prevention in their communities and schools?

The greatest risk to the success of our public safety programs is that we will focus too narrowly and address only parts of the problem. The new administration and the community will be challenged by the need to site new jails;

the opportunity to expand community crime prevention; and the task of providing real alternatives to drugs and alcohol for our children.

How will we invest in the lives of our children?

We have questions about how we will adapt to change, how to stem forces that chip away at the quality and security of our lives, and how to shape our future to our benefit. But our most basic concern must be the welfare of our children and our public education system. Economic growth brings wealth and opportunity. But how will we invest these benefits -- solely for the commuter? For open space? For more police? If not now, when do we make the significant investment we must in the preparedness of a new generation of leaders?

The true standard by which our vision of the future will be measured is the quality of our investments in the next generation. Our children are not only our individual legacies, but the living foundation of the society we hope to build.

Yet it is a bitter fact that children today are the most impoverished class among the American people. Even in Seattle, one in five children is poor. Minority children are the worst off -- more than half of the minority children in Seattle's schools come from low-income families.

Twenty percent of babies born in King County are not provided adequate prenatal care, and a small but growing number of newborns are addicted to drugs. Children are now the group at greatest risk of being homeless. Many families cannot afford daycare or after school care, and our present subsidy and scholarship programs are able to assist only 15 percent of the 10,000 children in our City who need help.

I have tried to make the needs of children our first human service priority. Our combined efforts have been substantial, and they have made a crucial difference in the lives of thousands of children. But more, so much more, needs to be done. Our citizens know this and a statewide coalition has brought the Children's Initiative to the ballot this fall. We must ask our candidates:

- o Where do you stand on the Children's Initiative?
- o Where would you direct the City's limited resources to make a difference in the lives of children?
- o Where can we find the resources to invest in early intervention and prevention, not just remedial actions and treatment?

If our children's welfare is the beacon of hope for the future, our public education system must produce the

excellence and achievement to make that hope real. Schools play a critical role in the upbringing of our children, and they are vital to the health of our City. Education is the key to how well our children are equipped to contribute to the economy and to the life of the community.

It is no secret that our school system faces an uphill battle to fulfill its promise. Social and economic changes have placed burdens on our school system well beyond its traditional role. Education is the first priority of our schools, yet we now expect them to be the means for racial integration, for sex and drug education, for identification of child neglect and health problems, and much more.

The health of our public schools is going to be a critical determinant of the vitality or decline of Seattle. In the past few years we have begun a determined effort to strengthen our partnership with the school district. We've adopted good policies on which to build the relationship. We have set the stage. But much more needs to be done.

Our city actions have complimented the school's mission to teach. We've started programs to strengthen health and human services within the schools, while leaving the direction and governance of the school system to the School Board. We must continue to distinguish clearly the role of

the City government and the role of our school district, but we must ask our candidates hard questions:

- o Is the City government's strategy of the 80's adequate to tackle the challenges of the 90's?
- o How will you expand the City government's support of the schools?
- o What action will you take to overcome the chronic underfunding of public education in the State?

We need action -- and not just money -- but time and commitment -- from business, not just government; from all citizens, not just parents. It is an encouraging sign that all candidates for office have made education a priority of their campaigns and we need to make it the centerpiece of the election. We must sharpen the debate and ask:

- o How will you encourage our business leaders to invest in public schools and lobby for basic education with the same vigor they devote to the needs of higher education?
- o What new commitments will you get from business to participate in preparing students for the jobs of the future, so our skilled workers will be home grown?

- o What example will you set to build the personal commitment of all our citizens -- single adults, parents, and retired alike -- to put their time and energy into meeting the needs of our public school children?

CONCLUSION

The questions I have asked are difficult. Together they are daunting enough to discourage candidates from running for public office. And yet, the great strength of this City is that the candidate, or the elected official, is never alone in the search for answers. The key to our past successes has been the vibrancy and commitment of our citizens, and those qualities will be the key to the future.

The wisdom of our community will show us the way. The Seattle spirit is an ethic that should permeate our response to every issue. We are proud of our City; we build coalitions to solve problems; we are a City of compassion; and our citizens are involved, caring, and believe in our collective power to make a difference.

As many of you know, I am a baseball fan. In recent months I've become a real believer in our new Mariners manager, Jim Levebre and his approach to the game. During

Spring training this year he said "It's a simple game. I try to get my pitchers to throw strikes and my hitters to put the bat on the ball. When pitchers throw strikes and batters hit, good things happen in baseball." The corollary is true in politics. I'd like to say to those who would lead us: Talk directly to the issues. Speak plainly about your priorities and your values. It's my experience that when politicians address the issues and speak honestly with the people, good things happen in government and politics.

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