

Laugh's on us a year before GOP arrives

● Comedian Mo Rocca will visit the Twin Cities this week to work on a "Tonight Show" piece on next summer's Republican convention.

By RANDY FURST
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It may say something about the state of things in America that the first major national television coverage of next summer's Republican National Convention in the Twin Cities will be a report by Mo Rocca, a comedian on Jay Leno's "Tonight Show."

Rocca and a production crew will be here Thursday to interview Mayors R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis and Chris Coleman of St. Paul, among others, as part of a "Tonight Show" segment expected to run in August.

"I am coming to the Twin Cities, and I am not favoring either of the Twin Cities over the other," said Rocca by telephone Tuesday. "I don't need to start any blood feud or restart any blood feud."

He then proceeded to start one.

According to "Meet Minneapolis," the plan is for Rybak to take Rocca on a bike ride and

Coleman to play bagpipes in his office.

Mo
Rocca

**Leno con-
tinues:**

Jon
Stewart
and
funny
news.

B5 ▶



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◀ LENO FROM B1

Rybak, who often rides his bike to work, was delighted. But Coleman hasn't played the bagpipes in a while and wasn't sure he could pull it off, noting that both the instrument and the player need tuning.

"It's a conspiracy," quipped Coleman. "I think some people are out to get me."

So much for playing nice

Told Tuesday that Coleman might not play the bagpipes, Rocca declared that "St. Paul for too long has been treated like Nicky Hilton as compared to Minneapolis' Paris Hilton.

"If St. Paul wants to gain the upper hand on Minneapolis, then Mayor Coleman better show me a good time," Rocca said. "If Mayor Coleman wants to trump Mayor Rybak, I want to see Mayor Coleman play those bagpipes while riding a bike — and it better be a tandem bike and I am going to be on the back and I ain't peddling."

Warming to the idea of a Twin Cities feud, Rocca said, "The people from Minneapolis and the people from St. Paul are like the Sharks and Jets from 'West Side Story.' The real question is: Who has the tastier lutefisk?"

On Tuesday, Rocca was filming in Denver, host of the 2008 Democratic convention, and both sites are expected to be featured in a single segment, he said. He arrives in the Twin Cities late tonight.

Jon Stewart started it

That the first major national TV news feature on the convention comes from the "Tonight Show" is no surprise to Larry Jacobs, director of the Center for

the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute.

Jon Stewart and "The Daily Show" started the trend, Jacobs said. "In the old days, journalists chose the news. Today it's the comedians setting the agenda." He said eventually the mainstream news media will catch up, and the Twin Cities will be inundated with

thousands of journalists.

Until then, Coleman, Rybak appear willing to play along.

"We better get used to the fact that every media of every kind, serious and funny, is going to be here, and I will do whatever it takes to put a good face on our great city," Rybak said. "People have no idea how many things I'll do to promote Minneapolis and over the next

year they are going to see how few boundaries I really have."

Coleman said he had already figured that out.

"I saw him doing the 'YMCA' in the Gay Pride parade last year."

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