

STATE CAPITOL ST. PAUL

SESSION SCENES

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

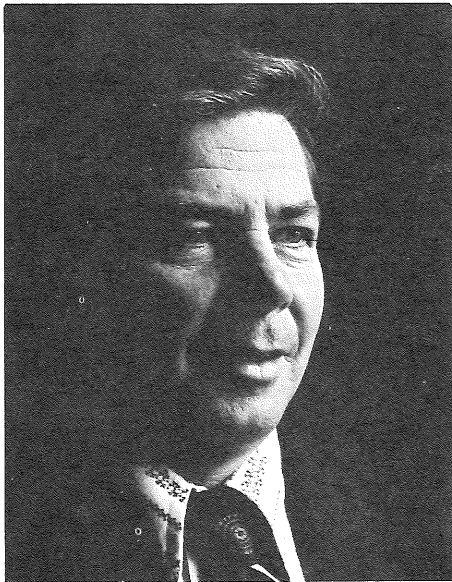
Vol. 3 No. 2

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House Information Office/Official Newsletter

Agriculture

The kerosene lamp, the hand pump at the kitchen sink, the neighbor threshing crews that traveled from farm to farm have disappeared from Minnesota's rural scene. Although progress has brought improved farming methods and increased comforts to



Family Farm Author
Rep. Willis R. Eken

our rural areas, farmers fear that the high cost of land and high interest rates may take away a tradition that has been the foundation of Minnesota's agriculture industry — the family farm.

Keeping the family farm in the family has been a prime concern of the 69th legislative session. The Agriculture Committee in the House has been looking for a way to bring farming within the reach of young people who have the experience and back-

ground but not the money to begin on their own.

Rep. George Mann (D-Windom) brought before the committee a House Advisory Bill he had introduced following somewhat the program in Saskatchewan, Canada. There the government is buying and leasing land in a program that involves one percent of the land and two percent of the farmers within the province. One of the aims of that program is to help retiring farmers sell their land to young people coming up.

In January of 1976, Rep. Willis Eken (D-Twin Valley) introduced HF 1984 which would appropriate \$10 million for a loan guarantee fund. Under this bill, any person who could meet eligibility requirements could get a reduced-interest loan for ten years with the option to renew at the end of that time for an additional ten. To be eligible, an applicant would have to be a resident of the state, or intend to be; have a total net worth of less than \$50,000; intend to purchase and use the land only for farming; have education, training, or experience in the type of farming for which he requests the loan. This bill has been making its way through the legislative committee system. As of March 15, it was in the Appropriations Committee.

Weather modification

For some time now, science has been attempting to give the farmer some control over what has governed his livelihood through the ages — the weather. Terms such as "cloud seeding" and "rain-making" have been around for awhile and are familiar

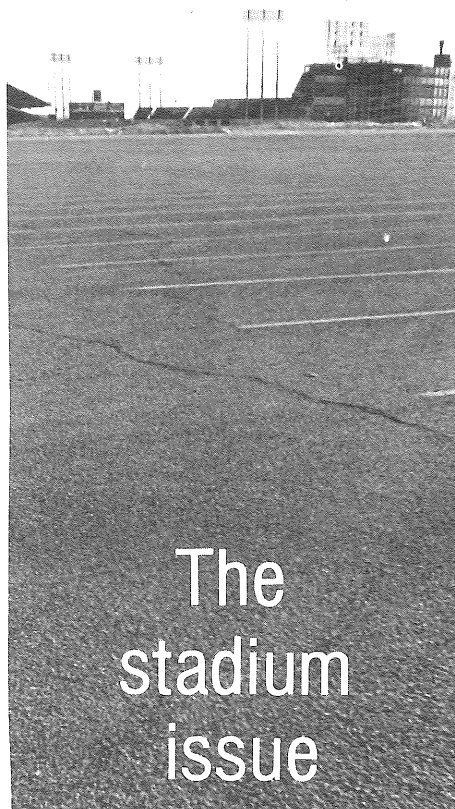
to most farmers. Weather modification is not a new subject before the legislature. Committees have studied it and researchers have reported on what has been going on in some counties in Minnesota and in other states.

In this 69th session Rep. Russell Stanton (D-Arco) is sponsoring a bill in the House that the Senate has passed, SF 1238 (Josephson, IR-Minnesota).

This proposed legislation, now in the House Governmental Operations Committee, would create an 11-member Minnesota Weather Modification Control Board. The board could hire an administrative officer, professional personnel, and other employees. Among its provisions, the bill would require the licensing of weather modification operations to eliminate the danger of improper use of weather altering methods.

Other concerns

Other legislation in the House runs the gamut of agricultural concerns from the problems of the grain farmer — from seeding to shipping — to a bill that will allow for county charter renewal after the expiration date; to allowing a family farm corporation member to serve on the board of directors of a cooperative; to giving the commissioner of agriculture the power to establish standards, grades, and price differentials between grades of milk and cream, requiring a public hearing before adopting standards; to provisions to eliminate bloc voting by cooperatives for their producer members on referenda on milk and milk products promotional orders.



The stadium issue

The question has been where to put a new stadium — in Bloomington, or in the Industry Square area of Minneapolis — or remodel the existing stadium at Bloomington — or do nothing.

How did it all get to the legislature? Early in the 1975 session, a stadium task force of the Minneapolis and St. Paul Chambers of Commerce brought the stadium issue to the legislature with this statement: "The task force agrees that if the 1975 legislature fails to act on this issue, there will not be any improved or new stadium for this area."

They recommended the construction of a new domed stadium for the Vik-

ings, Twins, and the University Gophers, telling the legislature that the professional teams would move from the area if "a new or improved stadium is not provided for them."

A joint House-Senate subcommittee studied the issue during the interim, and on Feb. 6 sent a bill to the legislature calling for the construction of a 65,000-seat, multi-purpose stadium in the Industry Square area near downtown Minneapolis.

The proposal would create a Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission which would issue general obligation bonds to borrow money for construction of the stadium. The revenues from ticket sales, rent, parking, concessions and sale of special box seats would pay off the principal and interest over 30 years.

According to Rep. John Tomlinson (D-St. Paul) chief sponsor of the bill, there would be enough money in a reserve fund for principal and interest payments. Legislators have proposed, discussed, accepted, and rejected a number of possible back-up taxes if the reserve fund couldn't pay all the expenses. Some of the proposed taxes included a metropolitan hotel-motel tax, a liquor tax, and a cigarette tax. Some legislators have suggested a statewide lottery for a back-up revenue.

Although they have not been able to agree on the source of back-up revenue, both House and Senate members have said that no property taxes will go for the stadium. Opponents to a new stadium point out that if revenues could not pay expenses, the issued bonds would have to have the backing of property taxes.

The proposal would not provide for a dome, but it would allow for adding one later if the money becomes available. Legislators have included a number of conditions that the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission would have to meet before issuing any bonds. Some of these conditions would be:

- public hearings
- traffic studies
- environmental impact statement



Rep. John Tomlinson

- Pollution Control Agency permit
- Vikings, Twins, and Gophers signing a 30-year lease
- protection against deficits
- no-strike, no-lockout agreements
- land donated free of all costs
- contractor-guaranteed price and posting of a \$10 million bond by the contractor
- a \$5 million payment for early release from the 30-year agreements

The bill would call for the issuing of \$47.5 million in bonds for the construction of the stadium in Industry Square and a \$2.8 million appropriation for one year for arts and cultural activities throughout the state.

Governor signs marijuana bill

Possessing a small amount of marijuana for the first time is now a petty misdemeanor which carries a fine of \$100 or less and no jail term. The recently passed legislation was the result of a 1975 conference committee report the House approved last year and the Senate adopted this past

month.

Under this new law, a person found guilty of having 1.5 ounces or less of marijuana (a lid or a small sandwich bag full) will get no more than a \$100 fine, and the violation will not go on a person's record as a criminal offense. A judge could order a drug education

program for a first offender.

For the second offense within two years the penalty would be a misdemeanor, punishable by 90 days in jail and/or a \$300 fine. The offender would have to participate in a chemical dependency evaluation and undergo treatment if the evaluation indicates this is necessary. With the governor's signature, the law became effective immediately.

The Capitol was their classroom

Twenty of them came each week from communities in all parts of the state, Babbitt, Cottonwood, Greenwood, International Falls, Borup, Albany, Rochester, to name a few. Some were from the Metropolitan area. They represented a cross section of Minnesota's population, a wide span of socio-economic backgrounds. They were the young men and women of "Project 120," high school juniors and seniors.

It was a six-week program, involving 120 students, that the Minnesota Branch of Urban Concerns Workshops, Inc. sponsored with the help of grant monies from the Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (MARBC). Project 120 had a small staff of "facilitators" who guided a group of 20 students through the program each week; an advisory committee which included legislators, members of the business community; and a Social Studies consultant from the State Board of Education.

The goal of the program was to build an understanding of the legislative process in Minnesota; the political party system of the state; how community activity interacts with the political process; and how to convert political awareness to political activity.



At evening banquets House leaders, such as Speaker of the House, Martin Sabo (D-Mpls.) and House Minority Leader, Rep. Henry Savelkoul (IR-Albert Lea) spoke to the students. At seminars they learned about the job of a lobbyist by talking to them, asking questions and getting answers.

As their weekly schedule moved along, project 120 participants met with elected officials of the state. They sat in on committee meetings and floor sessions of the House and Senate; learned something about the offices and services that support the overall functions of the legislature by visiting those offices and observing legislative staff at work.

At the end of their five days "inside government," almost all said they enjoyed most visiting with their representatives. Some said they are going to check with their local media — radio, newspaper, and cable television — and their high schools about doing more to get the word out on what happens in the legislature.

Most said they hope to get the people "back home" to share the active interest in the political-governmental process they plan to take with them when their experience at the Capitol is over. Jeffrey Henderson, a student from St. Paul's Central High School, said he'll use all he learned . . . "Some-day, I'm going to be president!"

House passes "garnishment reform"

On March 1, the House passed HF 1326, a bill that would make several changes in the garnishment laws of Minnesota. Its chief sponsor, Rep. James Casserly (D-Mpls.) told House members, "Garnishment is simply a mechanism whereby a creditor can have an employer hold a debtor's wages."

The bill would require creditors to give debtors seven days notice of their intent to garnish wages and inform them of any wages exempt from gar-

nishment. Casserly said, "This would make it quite clear to the debtor as a matter of public policy that he's entitled to exemptions currently in the statutes that very few people know exist." Income exempt from garnishment would include all "relief based on need, including AFDC, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Assistance, and general assistance."

HF 1326 would prohibit an employer

from discharging an employee because of garnishment procedures. Present state law says an employer can discharge an employee after two garnishments, or "executions." Casserly told the legislature that the bill tries to "eliminate pre-judgment garnishment as much as possible." He said a creditor would have to get a judgment or court order before garnishing wages so "someone would take a look at the claim of the creditor to see if it is a credible claim." State employees, now exempt from garnishment, would be subject to such action under this bill.

the office. . . the process. . .

Reflections on the legislative experience

As the bicentennial session moved to an end, five senior House members of the Independent-Republican caucus, some with nearly 20 years of service, shared their thoughts on the goals they brought with them to the legislature, their experiences, the changes they've seen, and the interests they've maintained throughout their legislative careers.

For some there were definite areas needing attention that became immediate goals. This was the case for Rep. Ralph Jopp (IR-Mayer) who came to the House in 1961. He set, as one of his first goals, solving a problem for a township in his district, which is 36A.

Jopp said, "The problem that they had in Chanhassen Township at the time was the absence of power of assessment to their citizenry. They wanted services which they were willing to pay for, but the major machinery in state government was not there to do it." He said, after a good deal of legislative work, a bill giving power of assessment to Chanhassen made it through the legislative process.

"This was one of the original laws in the state of Minnesota giving special power of assessment to townships." The law, Jopp said, was so successful that other townships in later sessions asked if he would get the same type of legislation passed for them.

Jopp plans to retire from the House this year. He's leaving with a sense of achievement and pride in the fact that, under his sponsorship, or co-sponsorship, over 120 bills passed the House and Senate to become law.

Rep. Rodney Searle (IR-Waseca), in his first campaign, faced an opponent that had been in the House

for a number of years. He didn't have ready-made goals, but "I just felt that there were things that could be accomplished that this man was not getting done," Searle said.

He sees his goals as having developed through his committee assignments . . . "I didn't think about it at the time, but I've thought about it many times since, that the fact that I was placed on Appropriations as a freshman; also on Education, set the pattern of the things I would become knowledgeable in — the funding of education, and the whole spectrum of appropriations."

All five representatives commented on the changes over the years. Rep. Gilbert Esau (IR-Mountain Lake) began his first term in the House in 1962, served three terms, was out for a few years, and returned in 1972. He said, "When we first got in, the research was bad. That was back in '62 and '64. Whenever we had constituents up, the only place we could talk to them was right in the cham-

ber. We had absolutely no place we could go for privacy."

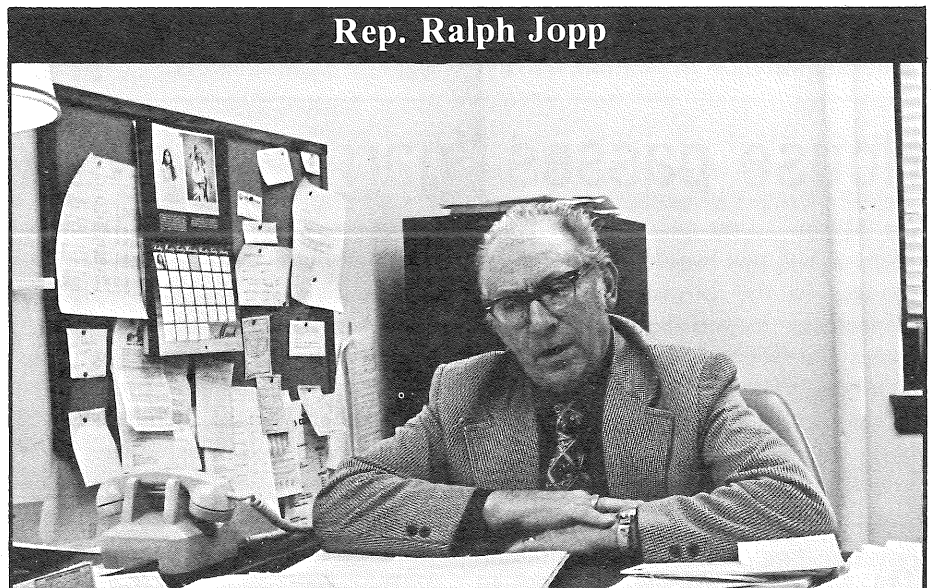
"We didn't have our own telephones. We didn't have our own desks — none of those things at all. I think there have been great improvements."

Rep. Wendell Erickson (IR-Hills) recalled similar problems when he served his first term in 1965. "I think we had five stenos all totaled. We dictated letters on the floor of the House. There were school groups going by our desk as we were dictating letters, you know . . . touring the Capitol. And we had to wait, sometimes several days, to get a letter typed up."

Erickson pointed to the contrast between then and now . . . "Now, of course, we do have our own office space; we do have WATS line telephones; we can get in touch with our local constituents which is a much improved situation."

Change is noticeable in more than just staffing and office space ac-

Rep. Ralph Jopp



"I've had a good rapport with my own caucus as well as our counterpart. I feel this is so necessary in order to do what we are expected to do as legislators."

Rep. Gilbert Esau



"I think we need a greater accountability in education. We see a decline in reading, writing, and computations. The fact that that decline is going rather swiftly is the cost, the greater cost, of education."

cording to Rep. Adolph Kvam (IR-Litchfield), a House member since 1966. "It (the House) tends to be more youthful. Certainly, at times this youthfulness shows up in particular legislative bills which are a little different than those of the more senior members within the legislative body."

Searle mentioned that younger representatives tend to be impatient, but his evaluation of the House at the time he entered office indicates a criticism of a different sort . . . "In those days, the legislature was looked on, at least by the members of some constituencies, as a place where the old 'tried and true' of the county, maybe an ex-county commissioner, or someone who had done an outstanding job on the county level, should be elevated to — an august position as recognition of what he had done at home. As a result, the average age, when I came in, I'm sure, must have been close to 55 or 60."

"What I'm saying," Searle continued "is that the average age of legislators has dropped drastically; and I think, in all honesty, that the average legislator today is not only younger, but better educated, and more articulate."

On the age factor, Erickson said, "When I first came here we had a

number of members with over thirty years experience in the House. It's almost scary to be one of the senior members now." He feels there is merit to having some legislators with long tenure of service. He believes "They have a certain wisdom that some of us who have been here a shorter period of time do not have."

Jopp noted that the House today seems to be moving faster than in the past. He said there is a tendency to "expedite" legislation, and in some cases this was good; but he thought

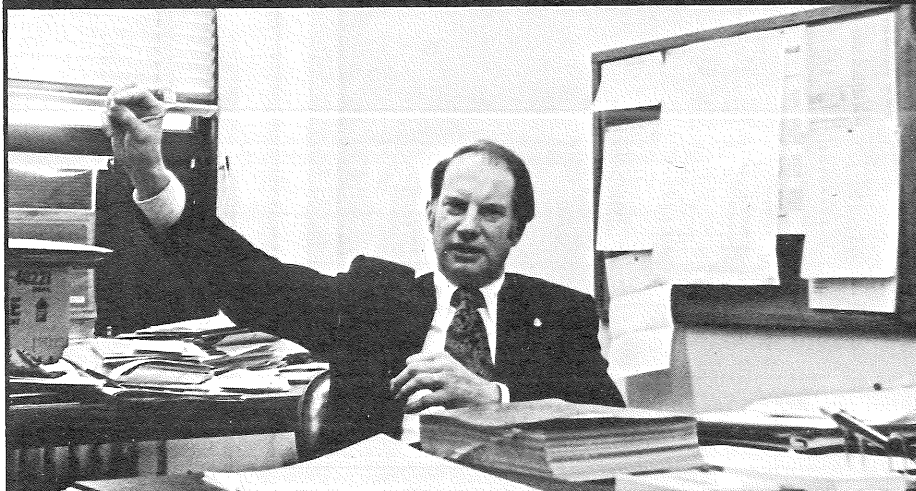
it could defeat the "basic purpose of a legislative act."

Kvam said he has come to believe that by concentrating heavily on specifics in the legislature, "We have failed to enact legislation that would be broad enough to affect people on a wide scope." He feels the House has been too issue-oriented rather than policy-oriented in recent years, causing the concentration on specifics. He said a policy could include a number of related issues instead of the limiting approach of a single-issue remedy for a single need.

Searle reflected on the rewards of legislative service . . . "The thrills of passing an important bill, or giving a fine speech, or doing a good job in committee, those are the instantaneous fanfares; but they're not long-lasting. The most rewarding experience that a legislator receives is his association with some very fine people from across the state, of both political persuasions."

"Sometimes it's hard for our constituents to understand how we'd be on opposing viewpoints and still be friends — that it's a matter of respecting another person's point

Rep. Wendell O. Erickson



"When local government is aware of the needs of the people, there's probably less reliance on government from there on up."

of view even though it isn't your own," Erickson said.

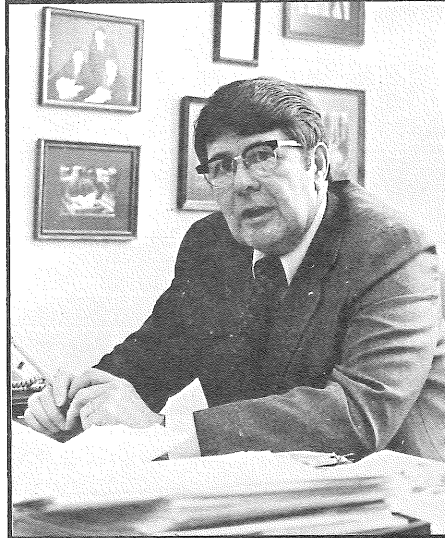
Kvam linked some of the improvements in staffing and office space with a loss of personal contact among members. "After the session was over you would sort of linger along. Maybe three or four guys would gather around one member's desk and have a 'skull' session on the day's activities. Today everybody hustles back to his own cubicle."

Humor is an important element, and a quality that some legislators may lack, according to Searle... "We've all got a lot of 'ham' in us, or we wouldn't be here. It's all right to intersperse humor once in a while with something not at anybody's expense. If you can point it inward, people don't resent this at all. But, getting the laugh off somebody else causes resentment. You have to be pretty careful about that."

In analyzing the rewards of a legislator's job, Kvam found this to be true... "The great satisfaction today is solving somebody's problem — being able to get an answer for that person."

Jopp said satisfaction in legislative work comes from "helping people

Rep. Adolph L. Kvam



"One of the things that concerns me, as a rural legislator, is the growing frustration of small business owners. Generally speaking these are Ma and Pa operations or father and son operations. They're not the world's largest enterprises but they do contribute to our overall economy in the rural area."

and organizations who are looking for assistance — becoming a 'catalyst' in their behalf — a person people in need will prevail upon when they find themselves with seemingly, insoluble problems."

Rep. Rodney N. Searle °



"I have seen few successful legislators that didn't have a sense of humor. If you get too serious with yourself, it's self-defeating."

Metro planning

A bill to promote orderly growth in the metropolitan area received the approval of the House during this session. Its chief sponsor, Rep. James Casserly (D-Mpls.) said if HF 1530 becomes law, all local units of government, principally municipalities, would have to adopt development plans for airports, sewers, recreation open space, and transportation.

The bill would require school districts to prepare plans for the construction or expansion of buildings using the council's guidelines. Supporters of the bill say it gives governmental units the necessary expertise to plan their futures while opponents say it takes away local control.

Waste disposal

Metropolitan communities faced with the problems of solid and hazardous waste disposal and resource recovery may want to follow the progress of a bill the House recently passed. — HF 1689 (Petrafeso, D-St. Louis Park.)

The bill would clarify the responsibilities of various metropolitan governmental agencies. It would require counties to encourage private ownership of waste facilities, but would give the Metropolitan Council and the seven metropolitan counties more control over them. The measure would allow counties to sell bonds for construction of resource recovery systems if the private sector does not build the needed facilities.

Chief sponsor Pete Petrafeso (D-Mpls.) said the bill would require the Metropolitan Council to prepare a long-range plan for collecting and processing both hazardous and solid waste in the metropolitan area. Counties would have to adopt the council's plan or get council approval on any revisions.

Library gets new director

The Legislative Joint Coordinating Committee of the House and Senate has appointed a director for the legislative reference library. The reference library collects, organizes, and makes information available to House and Senate members on a non-partisan basis to help in the work of the legislature.

The newly appointed director is Ms. Linda Feist Wallace. Ms. Wallace holds a Master's degree from the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Her work experience includes positions in Chicago's Municipal Reference Library, the government publications divisions of the Minneapolis Public and University of Minnesota libraries, and the position



of administrative assistant to the head of the St. Paul campus libraries.

After a month on the job, Ms. Wallace said, "I am delighted with my staff. They are both willing and able. I find

the work challenging, the atmosphere pleasant, and I certainly appreciate the time everyone has taken to acquaint me with the intricacies of life at the Capitol and to make me feel welcome."

Public Waters-Drainage Areas

A bill that aims at solving disputes over designation of "public waters" went to a House-Senate conference committee before getting approval of both the House and Senate. Farmers and the Department of Natural Resources have been in conflict over drainage practices since the 1973 legislature gave the department new power to decide what areas are "public waters" and what

areas farmers can use for agricultural production.

The House passed SF 1308 (Sherwood, D-Pine River) on March 16 and sent it on to the governor. This new legislation would require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to catalog all lake basins of more than ten acres in the state, on a county-by-county basis. Under the bill, if the DNR and the county

board are unable to agree on whether they should designate a particular area as "public waters," a five-member appeals unit would make the final decision.

The measure would set up a formal structure for compensating landowners who want to drain their land but cannot because the DNR has declared it "public water." The DNR would have to offer options, such as out-right purchase, property easement agreements, and leasing under a new "waterbank" program.

Update

Metro planning (HF 1530) Pg. six. This bill went to a conference committee.* On March 24, the House adopted that committee's report, passed the bill, and sent it to the Senate.

Solid waste disposal (HF 1689) Pg. six. The House substituted SF 1383 for the House file. The bill at press time was in conference committee.

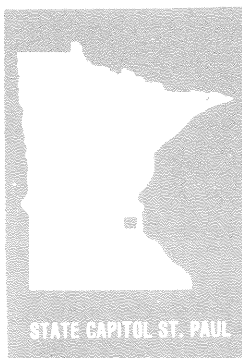
Garnishment reform (HF 1326) Pg. three. The Judiciary Committee in the Senate amended this bill and sent it to the full Senate where the legislators voted to table the measure.

Family Farm Security Act (HF 1984) Pg. one. Passed the House and went to the Senate. The Senate amended the bill; and at press time, it was due to come back to the House. The final issue of *SESSION SCENES* will summarize final action on this and other legislation.

The governor has signed: (SF 570, HF 675, Osthoff, D-St. Paul).

This legislation allows parents of children attending non-public schools to make a standard income tax deduction of \$700 for a child in grades 7 through 12, and \$500 for a child in kindergarten through 6th grade.

***Conference Committee** — When the House and the Senate both pass the same version of a bill, that bill goes to the governor for his approval or disapproval. If the House and Senate do not agree, a conference committee, made up of three to five senators, and an equal number of representatives, meets to reach an agreement. If both bodies then pass the bill in compromise form, it goes to the governor.



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MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Railroad abandonment

The uncertain financial condition of some of the nation's railroads has both state and federal government trying to work out solutions because of the effect of rail line abandonment on local communities throughout the country. Where is Minnesota in the railroad abandonment picture?

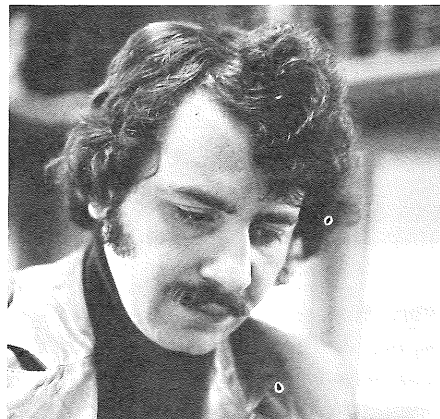
Right now, Minnesota ranks seventh in the nation in total miles of Class I railroad operations in the state — 7,990 miles of track. Over half of these are branch lines, short rail lines that feed into main lines that are more centralized and carry higher traffic loads and which often extend into other states.

Railroads have abandoned a total of 645 miles of rail line in Minnesota since 1967 and plan to add 436 miles to that figure. Many of these branch lines have deteriorated and the volume of traffic on them has gone down. They are "losers" for the railroads. Most of them are in the southern part of the state.

Before railroads can abandon lines, they must get permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). In some cases, abandonment is not a bad solution according to surveys. But many rural communities say they need some of these lines to move products to market and to develop or expand local industry.

In response to these needs, the Minnesota Public Service Commission has gone on record in ICC abandonment hearings opposing rail line abandon-

ments in Minnesota. Last year the State Planning Agency created the Railroad Planning Management Com-



Rep. Russell P. Stanton

mittee to study the situation and to make recommendations. The committee completed the study in the fall of 1975. It concentrated on ten lines that seem to have impact on local communities and which possibly could continue to give rail service. The committee looked at alternatives to abandonment, at effects of alternatives and abandonment on shippers, local communities, railroads and public costs.

Some of their conclusions were:

- Abandonment of some branch lines could be all right if other transportation is available to move goods in and out of affected local areas.
- State investment may be necessary to keep service on rail lines that transport goods for local industries.
- The state should identify and provide aid for rail lines before they

deteriorate to the point where railroads made application for abandonment.

The Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Act, HF 1876 (Stanton, D-Arco), which both the House Transportation and Appropriations Committees have recommended to pass, puts the recommendations of the study committee into bill form.

This proposed legislation would:

- create a state Rail Service Improvement Fund and a Rail Service Improvement Program with responsibility for implementation going to the State Planning Agency. This program would include both state and federal funds for railroad assistance.
- appropriate \$3 million to the Fund for rehabilitation of rail lines by way of three-way contracts among the state, shippers, other rail users, and the railroad. Taking part in any rehabilitation contract would be voluntary. This proposal is basically like the branch line rehabilitation program that has been successful in Iowa.
- authorize the State Planning Agency to establish a state rail plan and planning process and take whatever steps are necessary to get federal funds under the Rail Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976.
- require the State Planning Agency to study state regulatory and taxation policies that affect railroad service in Minnesota.