



# SESSION SCENES

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

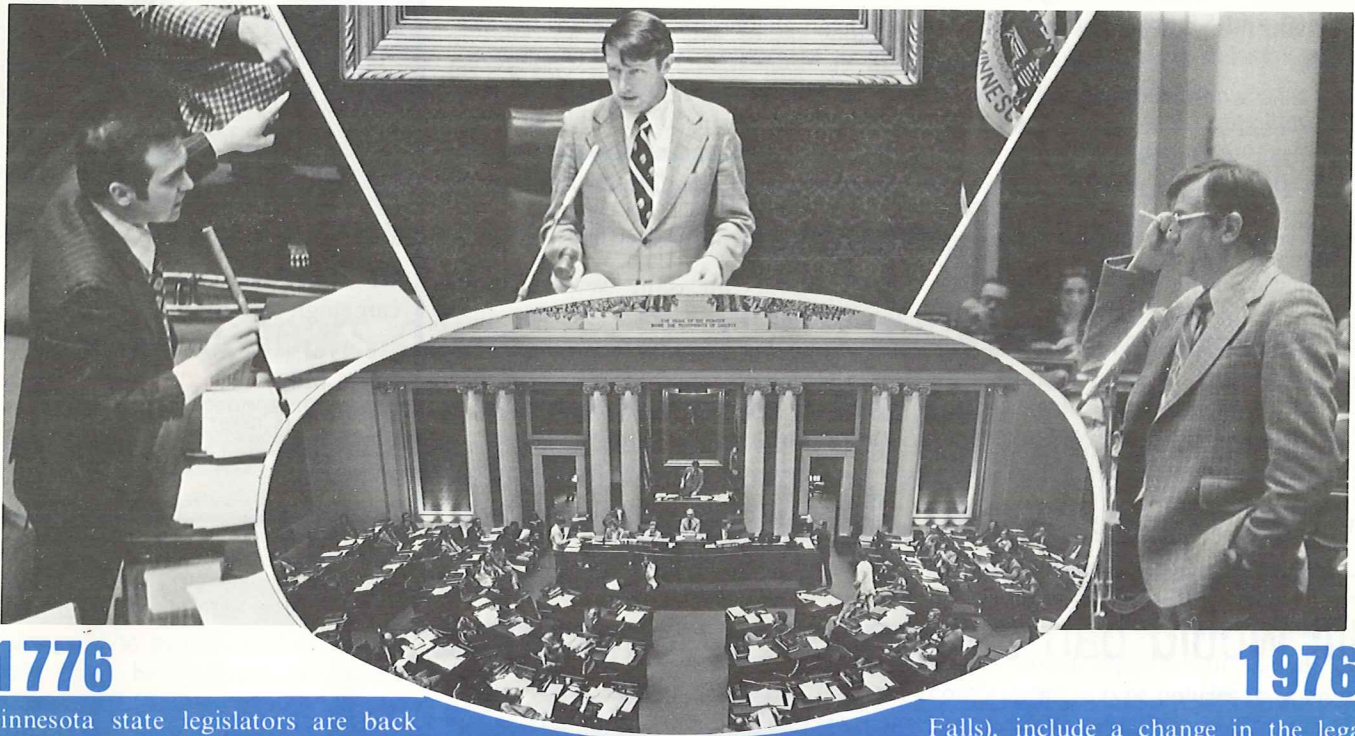
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STATE CAPITOL ST. PAUL

House Information Office/Official Newsletter

## ★ The Bicentennial Session ★



1776

1976

Minnesota state legislators are back in the State Capitol in St. Paul to complete the 69th legislative session which House and Senate leaders have predicted will end around the first part of April.

A \$40 million program of housing loans and grants that won House approval last year, but remains in conference committee "will probably be passed this session" according to Speaker Martin Sabo (D-Mpls.). Sabo said other bills that could pass this year include a \$7.38 million treatment program for alcoholics and drug addicts; legislation regulating the drainage of wetlands and defining clearly "public waters;" a bill aiding local planning, the Metropolitan Land Use Planning Bill; and a bill appropriating approximately \$10 million for

the operation of 37 minor state departments and commissions.

Legislation tightening operations at Stillwater prison; creating a Department of Transportation; setting up a state system of catastrophic health insurance; limiting the cost of medical malpractice insurance; revising nursing home laws; and authorizing the construction of a new sports facility for the metro area "may or may not be ready" for passage this session, according to Sabo. Legislative committees worked on these concerns throughout the interim.

Issues which could cause the most debate in 1976, according to Majority Leader Irvin Anderson (D-International

Falls), include a change in the legal drinking age; a stadium for the metropolitan area; usury rates; malpractice insurance; an energy bill which came out of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee during the interim; bingo regulation; and revisions in the 1975 Circuit Breaker Tax Law.

House Minority Leader, Henry Savelkoul (I-R-Albert Lea), predicts a bill changing the legal age for drinking will get through this session. He said the Legislature should make a decision on such issues as catastrophic health insurance, railroad abandonment, and a stadium for the metropolitan area. He added that the "circuit breaker" tax bill which passed last session needs some "technical changes."



# ★ Session '76 ★

In the first week of the 1976 session, the House passed and sent to the Senate a number of bills, including the \$9.7 million appropriations bill for the operation of semi-state agencies. The appropriations include \$500,000 in each fiscal year for the State Arts Council; \$5.9 million for the Minnesota Historical Society for a two-year period; \$240,000 each year to county and district agricultural agencies; and \$1 million for the Minnesota Veterans Home.

A bill that would require 60 days notice to tenants before rents can go up passed Jan. 28 with a 102-27 vote. HF 23, (Williamson, D-Bloomington) extends the present 30-day notification requirement for all housing except units that housing authorities own or operate. If the bill becomes law, landlords will have to give the 60-day written notice — or get a \$200 fine.

Seventeen-year-olds will be eligible to donate blood if a bill the House approved, 118-4, on Jan. 29, makes it through the law-making process. HF

1075 (George, D-Mahtomedi) changes the present 18-year-old age requirement for donating blood to 17.

In other action the House passed, 122-1, a bill which would require used car dealers to display the price and other identifying information on used motor vehicles they offer for sale.

On a voice vote, Jan. 29, the House gave preliminary approval to a bill reducing the hours of pheasant hunting in Minnesota. HF 238 (Anderson, G., D-Bellingham) restricts hunting hours from noon to sunset, changing the hours from the current sunrise to sunset after opening day. The bill also cuts the pheasant season from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30.

The present pheasant season runs from Sept. 16 to Dec. 31 but the Department of Natural Resources can set the length anytime between the two dates. (On Feb. 2, the House voted 114-13 in favor of HF 238.)

Legislation restricting the non-resident fishing season failed to win

preliminary approval in a 55-55 tie vote. HF 510 (Langseth, D-Glyndon), limits non-resident fishing licenses to 60 days if the non-resident license applicant comes from a state that has restrictions on duck and goose seasons for non-residents. Since the vote came on preliminary approval, the House can take the bill up again.

## ★ Update ★

This newsletter reports on these bills which the House recently passed:

<b>HF 1702</b> (Ulland, I-R-Duluth)	
aerosol spray ban	p. 2
<b>HF 2043</b> (Vento, D-St. Paul)	
campaign disclosure	pp. 4, 6
<b>HF 1767</b> (Fudro, D-Mpls.)	
bingo bill	p. 4
<b>HF 1530</b> (Cassérly, D-Mpls.)	
Metro planning bill	p. 7

## Bill would ban aerosol spray containers

If a bill coming before the Minnesota House of Representatives this session becomes a law, spray cans and other spray containers will not be as common in Minnesota households as they are today.

The Environment Natural Resources Committee voted two to one on Jan. 22 to recommend passage of HF 1702 (Ulland, I-R-Duluth). The bill would require labeling of all containers using fluorocarbons with the warning "propellant may cause harm to health and environment." The warning would have to appear on the labels of such containers within six months of the passage of the bill.

Fluorocarbons make up the substance manufacturers use in aerosol spray containers. After March 1, 1978, the



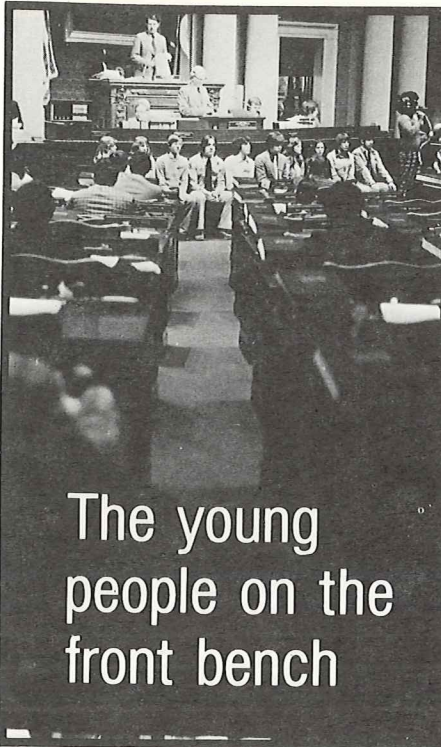
proposal would ban that use in Minnesota and would provide a penalty for violation of the ban.

Supporters of the proposed legislation say fluorocarbons use up the supply of ozones in the upper atmosphere around the earth. The ozone layer of the atmosphere protects humans by filtering harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

Those against the bill say scientists are not sure about the effects of the propellents. They also point out the amount of revenue and jobs the sale of aerosol containers generates in Minnesota.

The bill would not apply to the use of fluorocarbons in refrigeration or in dispensers for prescription drugs.





The young people on the front bench

Each year high school students from all over the state come to the Capitol to work in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The House High School Page Program offers these people an opportunity to gain first-hand experience by spending a week working in the Legislature.

In many cases, this may be the first time they have been in the Capitol. Consequently, some of the pages get a little stage fright at the thought of taking their places in the front of the House chamber. For some, fears of losing bills, not getting something in time, or getting lost in the building grow into mental images of certain catastrophe.

But, the end of the first day of the '76 session found the high school pages more comfortable and self-assured.

There may have been a few errors, but no casualties.

Although the pages' main concern is to serve legislators, the issues they watch with interest range from the environmental and social to legislative pay increases. They say they find legislators are easily accessible, easy to talk to, and that they are "normal" individuals, concerned with the problems of the state.

Most of the young people get involved in the High School Page Program because of a basic interest in politics. They want an on-the-job political education, an opportunity to evaluate different legislators' positions, and above all, to fill the gap between their course work and actual government work. That's a tall order for one week, they agree, but it's a start.

## Committee hears catastrophic health insurance proposal

New legislation proposing catastrophic health insurance for any Minnesota resident received its first hearings, in the Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance.

Sponsor of the proposal, Rep. James Swanson (D-Richfield) said the bill is "designed to protect middle income people from being financially wiped out by health care expenses." Under the bill (HF 1910), the state would pay for health care expenses after an individual or a family has spent \$5,000 or 50 percent of income, whichever is greater, in 12 months.

The legislation also would:

- require all insurance companies to offer standardized health insurance plans. (The basic qualified plan would cover 80 percent of most costs. The insured would pay a maximum deductible of \$150 and the remaining 20 percent of costs up to an annual limit of \$3,000 with the insurance companies paying the balance up to \$250,000 lifetime limit.)
- set up an insurance "pool" from which any person could buy health insurance, even people companies

now consider uninsurable (but excluding pre-existing conditions for the first six months).

- require all employers to offer health insurance to their workers, but would not require employers to pay for such coverage.
- strengthen the power of the State Insurance Commissioner to regulate health insurance rates.
- give the Minnesota Health Depart-

ment authority to review, but not regulate, the rates of hospitals and nursing homes and set up a uniform accounting and reporting system for those institutions.

Representatives of the insurance industry spoke against some parts of the bill saying that most insurance companies aren't big enough to sell the comprehensive type policies they would have to offer under the bill.

## Adjournment possible by April

The Joint House and Senate Coordinating Committee of the Minnesota Legislature set a mid-March deadline for committee action in both houses at a Jan. 14 meeting. In official action the House later adopted a resolution confirming the deadlines which both Senate Majority Leader Nicholas Coleman (D-St. Paul) and House Speaker Martin Sabo (D-Mpls.) said would, hopefully, result in an April 1 adjournment.

The Minnesota State Constitution

limits the legislature to 120 days of floor session over a two-year period which begins with the odd-numbered year, or budget session. The Legislature used a total of 57 days during the 1975 session and could use the remaining 64 during the '76 session. The Constitution also sets a calendar deadline for final adjournment, the first Monday following the third Saturday in May, or this year, May 17. The legislature must adjourn by that date, but can adjourn earlier.



# General legislation and Vets Affairs hears Bingo and Campaign Bills

A bill that would regulate bingo games in Minnesota, and another that would require candidates for local office to disclose their campaign funds are ready for House action.

The Committee on General Legislation and Veterans Affairs has recommended for passage HF 1767 (Fudro, D-Mpls.), a bill that would require any organization having bingo games to have a bingo manager who has been a member of the organization for at least two years.

The bill would limit the prize for a single game to \$100 or less and require bingo operators to provide "checkers" who would make sure receipt amounts

correspond with the number of bingo cards workers sell during a game.

When there is a "cover-all" game (to win the player must cover all numbers on the bingo card), the limit would be \$500. Fudro said some prize money goes as high as \$3,000 on a cover-all. The bill would put into law a regulation requiring bingo managers to file reports with the State Department of Commerce.

The campaign fund disclosure bill, HF 2043 (Vento, D-St. Paul), would apply to all candidates for county elected offices, all city elected offices in cities of over 20,000 population, and all school district elected offices in school

districts having a population of over 20,000.

If the bill becomes law, principal committees of candidates and all other political committees would have to report prior to elections, disclosing sources of contributions over \$50, any campaign debts the candidate incurs over \$100, and every expenditure over \$100.

The proposed legislation would also require all local candidates to list their economic interests, liabilities and assets, within 14 days after they have filed for elective office. HF 2043 does not set limits on campaign spending or contributions.

## Malpractice rates become '76 issue

Rising malpractice insurance rates for physicians and hospitals and their effects on the consumer have brought the malpractice insurance issue to the Legislature. A Medical Malpractice Advisory Subcommittee is looking into the issue.

In its continuing examination of the malpractice problem, the subcommittee recently heard from Sidney M. Wolfe, M.D., director of the Health Research Group of Public Citizens, a Ralph Nader organization in Washington D.C. Dr. Wolfe said "primary attention must be directed toward the health care system as the real source of the crisis."

He urged the committee to consider legislation to:

- require all hospitals to set up patient grievance and quality assurance programs, offering aggrieved patients alternatives to the filing of malpractice suits.
- require all hospitals to provide an annual performance report to the state showing the quality of care in their institutions.
- establish health licensing boards as powerful, consumer-oriented

bodies with subpoena power; investigative staffs; and available data on hospitals and doctors.

- set up risk-prevention programs in every hospital to investigate the causes of malpractice suits and take preventive action to eliminate these causes.

Aiming at getting a handle on the malpractice problem before it becomes a crisis situation as it has in other states, the subcommittee is looking at various legislative proposals. Some of these already include a number of Wolfe's suggestions.

One proposal would require physicians to complete a minimum of 150 hours of continuing medical education every three years. Another would expand the duties and powers of the State Board of Medical Examiners. This would provide procedures for reporting and investigating malpractice complaints, would grant the board subpoena and investigative powers, and would make information available on the licensing of medical and osteopathic doctors.

An insurance-related proposal seeks to establish guidelines for the State

Insurance Commissioner to investigate and review insurance rate changes. It would provide for an insurance actuary in the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Insurance to work in the area of rate monitoring.

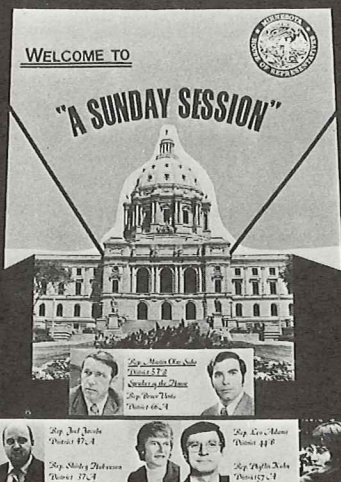
Chairman Lyndon Carlson (D-Brooklyn Center) hoped the subcommittee can reach agreement on recommendations by early February. At that time, they will end their hearings until the session is over and meet again during the interim to draw up positive recommendations.

### Clarification

The first paragraph on "Veterans Preference" in the December newsletter should have read:

"Veterans no longer have 'absolute' preference for local municipal jobs. Past state law granted absolute preference to veterans for local municipal jobs and limited preference for state positions. The limited preference now applies to all levels of government on those positions that require an examination."





The House hosted . . . Speaker Sabo presided . . . the public came to a mock session.

*Upper right* Harlan Stern, Mpls. learns about procedure.

*Lower right* youth governs at 1975 YMCA "Youth in Government."



## Veterans Home gets legislative attention

The increasing need for facilities at the Minneapolis Veterans Home has been before the Legislature during the interim and into the session.

During the Interim, Russell Green, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs spoke to the Health, Welfare, and Corrections Division of Appropriations to outline the situation at the Veterans Home.

Contrary to our earlier report, there is no plan to move the Minneapolis Veterans Home to Hastings. Green was presenting a proposal for use of Building 4 at Hastings State Hospital. The state has declared this building surplus.

Green explained, "We originally had 587 beds at the Minnesota Veterans Home, but because of health regulations and life safety standards, we were forced to reduce that number to 542. This is the figure that we have today." The Department of Veterans Affairs would like to house some patients in Building 4 at Hastings.

There is a bill in the House, HF 406 (Skoglund, D-Mpls.) that aims at solving the Veterans Home situation. Skoglund said the Home "has been criticized for failing to provide adequate health care. One of the chief reasons for this has been the antiquated facilities which house approximately half of its residents. These dwellings

were built in the late 1800's and, of course, cannot meet health, food service, and fire safety standards of 1976."

Skoglund said, "The Home is a bargain to Minnesota taxpayers because of VA revenue sharing. If there was no Veterans Home, there would be no assistance from the VA and most of the home residents would require state or county financial assistance to support themselves in private nursing facilities."

The Home has a waiting list of over 200. Skoglund said if the federal money does not go to the Minnesota Home, "it will go to another state's home."



# 'men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha

## General Legislation and Veterans Affairs



A state lottery would require an amendment to Minnesota's constitution, and Rep. Bruce Vento (D-St. Paul), chairman, said that is one of the issues the General Legislation and Veterans

Affairs Committee will take up this session. Along with it will be an investigation into the State Fair operation, confirmation of two appointments to the Ethics Commission, and bills relating to elections.

Vento said he hoped for early favorable action on HF 2043 which he authored. It's a local campaign financing disclosure bill that would apply to all candidates running for elected county offices and to all those seeking offices in municipalities or school districts with populations of over 20,000 or more. (see page 4)

In reviewing some interim activity, Vento told of the extensive hearings the Elections Subcommittee held on HF 1867 (Osthoff, D-St. Paul), a bill

that would put a moratorium on the purchase of the "Votomatic" ballot system by communities in the state. Some Minnesota municipalities are using the system, but Vento said some other states have questioned its reliability; and HF 1867, would allow some time to take a good look at it before again permitting its use in Minnesota.

The subcommittee (joint House and Senate) reviewed two other types of voting systems in January — "Data-mark" and "Datavote". Vento said legislators may want to consider them as possible alternatives to the costly lever-type voting machine and the time-consuming paper ballot methods which account for 90 percent of the state's ballots.

## Judiciary

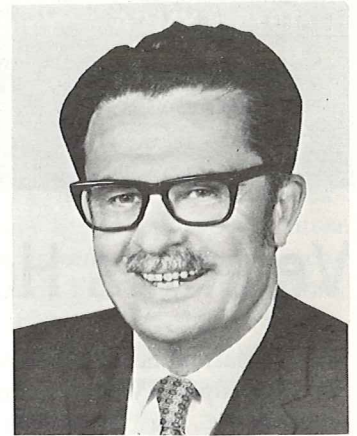
"Making the delivery of justice through our court system more efficient" is a goal of the Judiciary Committee, according to Chairman Richard Parish (D-Golden Valley).

During the 1975 interim, the committee "gave a great deal of study" to court reform Parish said. He predicts the Judiciary Committee will "probably deal with some adjustments in court scheduling and administration with a good chance of them becoming law." However, he added that significant reform will require more study and analysis.

Because of a Minnesota Supreme

Court ruling that "the state can be sued just like any private individual beginning August 1," Parish said the Judiciary Committee will be looking at legislation to place reasonable limitations on these suits. The Supreme Court directed that the Legislature could do this, so Parish is certain the "legislation will pass this session."

Parish gives uncertain chances of passage at this time to legislation dealing with the legal side of the medical malpractice issue, because "perceived features of the legal system may not decrease the cost of doctors' malpractice insurance." He believes



the issue needs further analysis before "any legislation can produce a solution."

## Breast cancer screening

Xeroradiography, an X-ray technique some medics say is highly successful in the early detection of cancer, came under review by the House Health and Welfare Committee.

The committee is considering a bill directing the Department of Health to set up six regional cancer screen-

ing/treatment centers and to provide "promotional materials for a statewide effort to publicize the work of the centers." Under the bill, the state would pay for administration and staffing of the program. The women using the centers would pay for the cost of Xeroradiograms.

Drs. A. W. Waters and Richard YaDeau of Bethesda Lutheran Hospital told the committee a woman has a better than 85 percent chance of surviving five years after discovery and treatment of breast cancer if discovery comes before the cancer has had a chance to spread to the lymph nodes. Then, she has about a 50 percent chance.



# 'men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha



"The Local and Urban Affairs Committee is constantly looking into local government, at ways to strengthen it and make it more visible to the eyes of the electorate," Rep. Tom Berg (D-Mpls.) said about the committee he chairs and which has before it now the stadium bill and proposals for

## Local and Urban Affairs

legislation on land-use, waste disposal, and local government planning.

The committee has been dealing heavily with the land-use question and has recommended HF 1530 (Casserly, D-Mpls.) for passage, Berg said. This is a mandatory land-use planning bill which came out of the Local and Urban Affairs Committee last session. Berg expects it to be up before the House early in this session. The bill would require local governmental units to coordinate their land-use planning with metropolitan units of government to assure long-term planning for the metro area.

A second proposed piece of legislation on land-use is the "Metropolitan

Significance Bill," HF 1881 (Casserly). The intent of the bill is "to promote the orderly and economic development, public and private, of the metropolitan area." Berg said it will also be up before the full House this time around.

In citing other bills the committee hopes to act on, Berg included a proposal to regulate solid waste disposal in the metropolitan area, and a bill that would make significant changes in the power and authority of the Minnesota Municipal Commission. That commission makes decisions on boundaries, annexation, and consolidation of townships and municipalities.

## Agriculture

The fact that young farmers can't afford farm land because of skyrocketing land values and interest rates brought about the present Farm Security Act, HF 1984 (Eken, D-Twin Valley) according to Rep. George Mann (D-Windom) chairman of the Agriculture Committee.

He said, "Unless we develop better ways and means to help farmers get started, we are going to have young farmers disappear from the land." To make money available to young farmers, and to distribute that money effectively, Mann said, "We intend to structure the loans through lending institutions."

Coming up as major legislation, too,

is a pesticide and herbicide bill which Mann said was "held up from last session because the federal government was developing new rules and regulations relating to pesticides and herbicides. The Agriculture Department of Minnesota has been working with the federal government to find out what it actually wants. They pretty well arrived at their final decision, and the bill should pass through the House this session."

Mann said other issues before the committee that will require more study before they are ready for further legislative action are weather modification, shelter belts (wind and water barriers to prevent soil erosion), and a study of Minnesota's inventory of



underground water.

Dr. YaDeau said records of 5,000 women that medics have examined with Xeroradiography showed —

—the technique detected minimal cancer (a tumor too small for detection by hand examination) in 59 women —38 of these 59 women underwent surgery. In only one case the cancer had spread from a tiny lump in the breast to the nearby lymph

nodes.

Committee members asked about possible harmful effects of radiation from the use of Xeroradiography. Dr. Glen Cramer, radiologist, said the National Commission on Radiation has called the procedure safe.

Dr. YaDeau testified that "not all patients should be brought under X-ray surveillance." He said there are certain

"high risk" women who should get a yearly X-ray. These include women who had their first child after age 28, women with breast cancer in their families, women with other diseases of the breast, and women who have had one breast removed.

The Health and Welfare Committee hopes to take up the bill again while the legislature is in session.



# Men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha

## Financial Institutions and Insurance



Malpractice insurance, catastrophic health insurance, and usury legislation are some of the bills occupying the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee this session. Rep. B. J. Brinkman (D-Richmond), who chairs the committee, said malpractice would probably be the committee's number one priority, and added, "It should pass through this session."

The Catastrophic Health Insurance Act HF 1910 (Swanson, D-Richfield) Brinkman said should "take care of those people who can't buy insurance today and those that have the misfor-

tune of a catastrophic situation whereby their insurance will not take care of what their needs are." Brinkman noted, "I would urge passage of both malpractice and catastrophic."

Redefining the usury rate from its present eight percent level would be advantageous to the state according to Brinkman. "There are no conventional mortgages, and the conventional mortgage is probably the key to single home financing," he said; and added, "We have many small businessmen that have to incorporate because they cannot borrow money at eight percent."

## Education

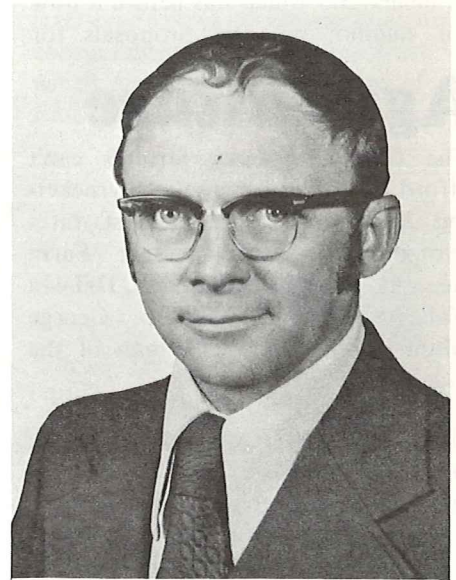
"The biggest problem in education today," according to Education Committee Chairman Rep. Carl Johnson (D-St. Peter), "is the image of education in the state of Minnesota. Johnson fears that teacher strikes and districts running out of money have bred a climate where "education does not enjoy the same importance it did a few years ago."

To stop this trend, Johnson said, "I would like to advance a bill calling for an educational task force or a permanent study commission. People are asking where education is going, and we ought to know. It is my hope

that a study commission can be established this session."

The Education Committee will review the special education funding formula this session. Johnson said, "There is a lot of public support for going current on special education." He added, "I believe it has a good chance of passage."

Other bills the committee will scrutinize include additional funding for the assessment program, comprehensive health and safety bills, and a bill calling for mandatory economic education in public schools.



## Transportation

"I'm not a farmer, but I can see their problem," said Rep. Stanley Fudro (D-Mpls.), referring to the railroad abandonment problem in the state. He explained that railroads are abandoning unprofitable rail lines in Minnesota, cutting off rail transportation to farmers and cities.

Fudro, who is chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said his committee is considering legislation which would help restore some abandoned lines in the state. He said the problem affects most states and is

cause for concern and possible legislation at the federal level.

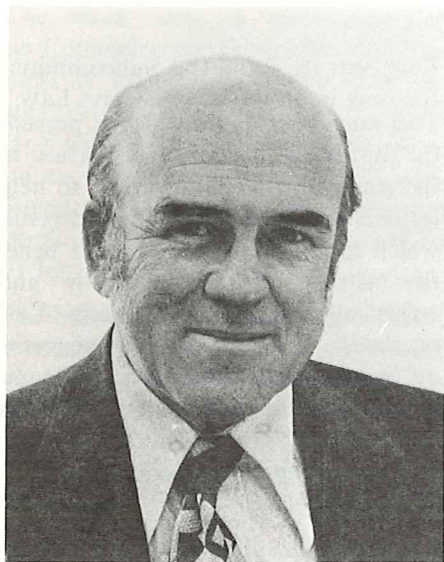
During the interim, the Transportation Committee met in communities throughout the state, holding hearings on railroad abandonment and other transportation issues.

Bills before the committee this session include the proposed rail abandonment legislation; a large bridge bonding bill; a bill increasing the axle weight limit for trucks; and a bill which would allow an increase in the length of truck trailers.



# men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha

## Higher Education



Higher Education Committee Chairman Peter Fugina would like to see an on-going study of higher education to "keep education current . . . as the world changes . . . so that we can meet current needs and needs of the future."

Fugina (D-Virginia) is the author of a bill combining the budgets of all state colleges and universities and establishing a study commission. The bill, HF 1397, calls for an out-of-state educator to head the combined board and to employ necessary staff.

Fugina assessed this as one of the pressing issues before his commit-

tee, and believes that the provision setting up a study commission "should pass this session." The study commission, which would consist of six representatives, six senators, and three citizens whom the governor would appoint, "would also look into the private colleges in the state and how they fit into the educational structure."

Commenting on the question of removing the right of the University of Minnesota to govern itself, Fugina said, "This authority was granted at the time of the territorial government." He feels the legislature should have closer control over the university.

## Government Operations

Rep. Harry Sieben, Jr. (D-Hastings) discussed higher pay for state officials, the open meeting laws, and Workers Compensation legislation when asked about issues awaiting action in the Governmental Operations Committee.

Sieben, chairman of the committee, on the state officials pay hike said, "Pay for high level state officials is always controversial," and added that pay bills may be Governmental Operations' first priority in the 1976 session.

About the open meeting laws, Sieben said the set of bills addressing open meetings and open records that are

in committee look "good" in their present form, and will probably stay in that form. Some of them deal with exceptions to the laws on open meetings and records although, Sieben commented, "The press feels there should be no exceptions."

The Workers Compensation question of extending benefits to people who give up their employment willingly will get a longer look by the committee before the lawmakers will try to decide "whether or not people who quit their jobs voluntarily should be entitled to Workers Compensation," Sieben said.



## Appropriations

The House Appropriations Committee purposely deferred building requests until the Legislature would reconvene this month, Rep. Fred Norton (D-St. Paul), chairman, said. The reason was to allow the Building Subcommittee to hold hearings on proposals and to give the subcommittee a chance to get out and view building sites during the past seven months.

Building requests will now be the chief consideration of the Appropriations Committee. Norton explained that the House committee appropriates most funds in the beginning session of a biennium and will be conservative in appropriating funds now. Norton said, too, that many of the appropriations bills the Committee recommended for passage in 1975 still await final House and Senate action.



# 'men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha

## Taxes



Rep. William Kelly (D-East Grand Forks), looks for a "good inheritance tax bill" to come out of this session

and gives a high priority to the study of the state's inheritance taxes in the Taxes Committee. He talked about some of the theory and objectives the present law may not be meeting. He said legislative action might include some changes in joint tenancy, increases in the number of tax exemptions, and establishment of a long-range inheritance tax.

Kelly referred to "minor" changes in the circuit breaker law that the committee will have to deal with — mainly to provide some tax relief for senior citizens who live in federally subsidized housing.

The three Taxes subcommittees will also be busy, Kelly reported. He said the Income Tax Subcommittee will examine the various personal and corporate tax collection forms which legislators would like to make easier for taxpayers to use.

Kelly sees the Land Use Subcommittee focusing in on the "Green Acres Law." The intent of this law is to prevent the disappearance of good farms in the state's metropolitan areas; to help farmers to stay on their land, a result which the Legislature felt would benefit metro areas economically and esthetically. The Green Acres Law regulates taxation and assessments on metro area farms. The subcommittee will analyze whether effects have matched the intent of the law and recommend any necessary changes.

The Energy Subcommittee of Taxes will face numerous energy tax-related bills, according to Kelly, who said these bills are calling for an increase in exemptions from, or reductions in, sales, income, or real estate taxes to encourage use of energy conservation methods and to discourage energy waste.

## Labor-Management

Rep. Stanley Enebo (D-Mpls.), chairman, said the Labor-Management Relations Committee has six main bills up for legislative action. Three bills Enebo is sponsoring take on the problems of disposing of unfair labor practice claims (HF 1915); public employee salary schedule continuation during negotiations (HF 1616) and the right of choice in dues check-off contributions (HF 219).

Enebo said HF 1915 is a "professionals bill, giving guidelines so that arbitrators and mediators can make better decisions and establishing an orderly operation for collective bargaining in Minnesota." He said interim hearings throughout the state on unfair labor practices showed teachers and other public employees want their problems settled with greater speed and more efficiency than the current system provides.

The "Buddy Bill" HF 1868 (Fugina, D-Virginia), Enebo referred to as a "common sense bill." It would require that there be at least two qualified people working in hazardous areas, with hazardous equipment, or with hazardous materials.

The sixth piece of proposed legislation is HF 1662 (Fugina). This bill would abolish mutual aid pacts within the airline industry and prohibit financial assistance to striking airlines. Enebo listed another "interesting bill" that he had not yet introduced in the House. It deals with a study on the economic status of women in Minnesota. He said the Labor-Management Relations Committee has held hearings on this bill, and "with the governor's support, it will most likely pass."

Enebo acknowledged that there may not be enough time to get all of these



bills through this session, but said, "They will at least gain some recognition."



# 'men, Comments, Committees, Chairmen, Comments, Committees, Cha

## Commerce and Economic Development

The major issue in the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development is whether or not to raise the legal drinking age, Rep. Doug Johnson (D-Cook), chairman, said. In the committee is, HF 1831 (Langseth, D-Glyndon), a bill that would raise the drinking age to 19 for on-sale and to 21 for buying liquor off-sale.

The bill received subcommittee recommendation by a narrow margin, and representatives report they have received a lot of mail both for and against raising the drinking age. Johnson said he feels the bill the subcommittee sent to the full committee is "unworkable."

Johnson said several bills relating to telephone companies will get committee action. During the interim, Johnson said the committee conducted hearings around the state on HF 1744 and HF 1833 (both Anderson G., D-Bellingham).

HF 1744 proposes to divide the state into four areas and provide for toll-free calls within each area. HF 1833

would authorize the Public Service Commission to investigate telephone companies upon receipt of complaints alleging that the service is insufficient or unreasonably expensive from 1,000 (or 20 percent) of the companies' subscribers. The bill would allow the commission to consolidate companies if necessary.

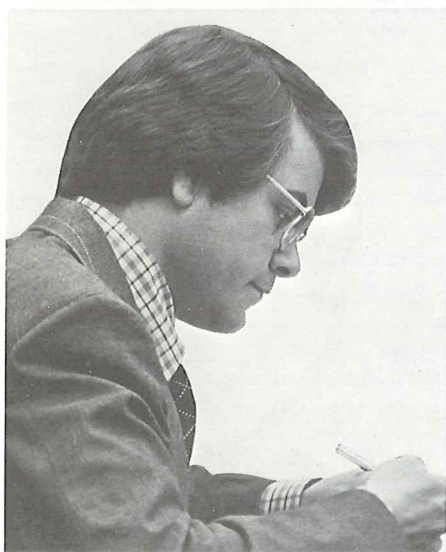
Also, in the committee are two bills Rep. James Casserly (D-Mpls) is sponsoring. Both of them deal with assistance to Minnesota's businesses. HF 1117 would establish a business assistance office within the Department of Economic Development. HF 1116 would provide a loan fund and certain tax exemptions with the intent to give businessmen a chance to further develop their services.

Johnson mentioned HF 1801 (Clawson, D-Center City) as a proposal he thinks "would help curb the flood of bad checks in the state by toughening up the laws." Among other provisions, the bill would remove the required notice to the writer of a worthless



check that the check has not cleared the bank; increase penalties for second and third offenses; allow courts to order the guilty to pay attorney and court costs; assess costs to uncooperative witnesses; and absolve banks from liability for releasing information to law enforcement personnel.

## Crime Prevention and Corrections



Rep. Donald Moe (D-St. Paul), chairman of the Committee on Crime Pre-

vention and Corrections, sees as main issues before that committee possible new prison construction, determinate sentencing, and legislation dealing with juvenile offenders.

During the interim, an investigation by the joint Minnesota State Prison Committee examined the prison industry, parole board, security and disciplinary system, health and education system, prison management, and the system of classifying prisoners in Stillwater.

The investigative committee came up with some specific recommendations that include the possibility of constructing two new facilities away from the present prison location, one for maximum security prisoners, and one for

medium security prisoners — and setting up standards for community correctional facilities.

Moe said determinate sentencing which would commit prisoners for a set length of time will definitely come up this session. On the juvenile offenders issue Moe listed four major bills. This proposed legislation would attempt to place minors in a shelter-care facility rather than a detention center; would increase penalties for those who engage in juvenile prostitution; would mandate family consulting for families that have repeated juvenile offenders; and would authorize a study on juvenile repeaters, those who commit violent crimes, and the programs available to them.





# SESSION SCENES

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Information Office/Official Newsletter

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## Committees, Chairmen, Comments



### Health and Welfare



In singling out the top health/welfare issues in this session of the Legislature, Rep. James Swanson (D-Richfield), chairman of the House Health and Welfare Committee, pointed to the need for regulation of the nursing home industry, the need for alternatives to institutional care, and the malpractice insurance problem.

On nursing homes he said, "We need better laws to regulate the nursing home industry. Recent criminal and court cases involving institutions and individuals focus on that fact." He sees the weekly House/Senate joint committee hearings "that have been going on since last June" as a step in

the direction toward getting better laws. That committee produced a package of ten bills relating to the operation of nursing homes for the Legislature to consider.

Commenting on the recent federal court action that zeroed in on the institutional care problem, Swanson said he views this as an indication of the need for a thorough, indepth study of ways for communities to care for people without placing them in institutions. So, he said, a special subcommittee of Health and Welfare will look into alternatives communities can come up with to keep people in their community environment.

### Environment and Natural Resources

"I think we are going to have an energy crisis in this state in the near future and it is up to the state of Minnesota to conserve its energy," Rep. Willard Munger (D-Duluth), said.

Munger, chairman of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, believes his committee is bringing about the needed change. He said, "In the 1973-74 session, we passed more good environmental bills than we have had in 100 years."

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee recommended 16 major pieces of legislation last session, according to Munger. "I think the one dealing with energy conservation will be one of the most important bills that

will be heard by the house this session," Munger said.

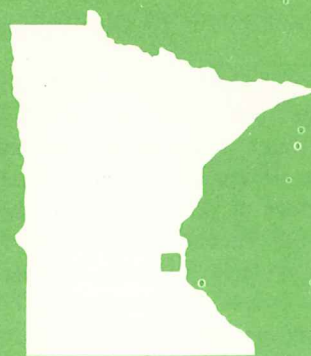
Land-use and solid waste proposals will be before Munger's committee. "I think a land-use bill is long overdue," said Munger. But he added, "I doubt that we will have land-use ready and in shape to pass this session."

"The solid waste bill I have in mind," said Munger, "would establish the rights of county governments to have an environmental agent that would work in cooperation with the PCA."

About his committee, Munger said, "We handle everything from wolf tracks to nuclear power. I think we have established a good record."







STATE CAPITOL ST. PAUL

# SESSION SCENES

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

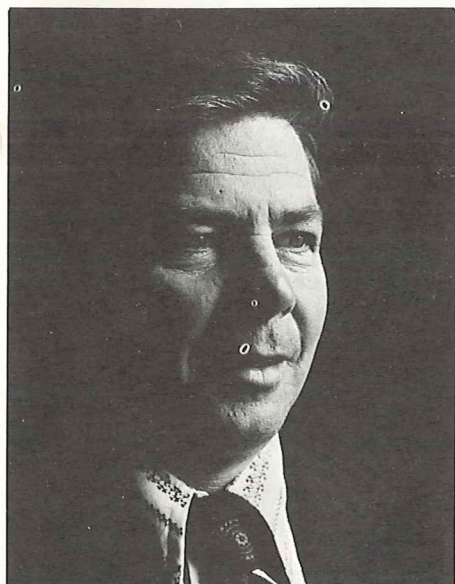
Vol. 3 No. 2

March 1976

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-Window) 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.

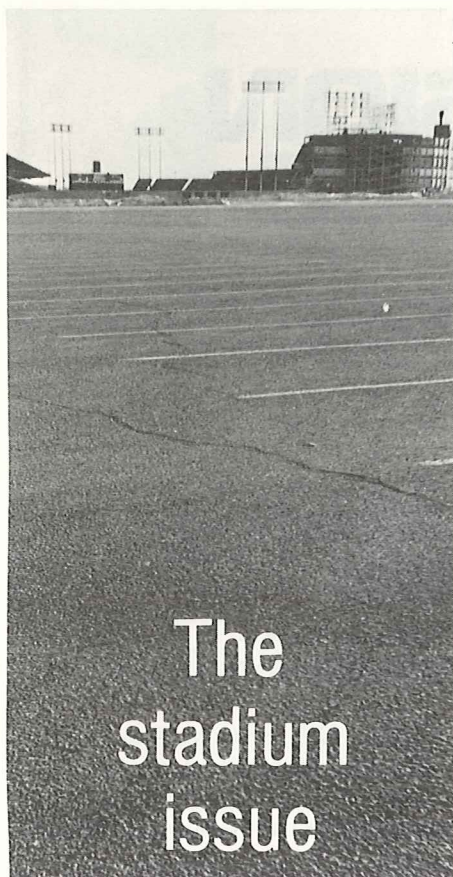
In this 69th session Rep. Russell Stanton (D-Arco) is sponsoring a bill in the House that the Senate has passed, SF 1238 (Josephson, IR-Minnesota).

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.

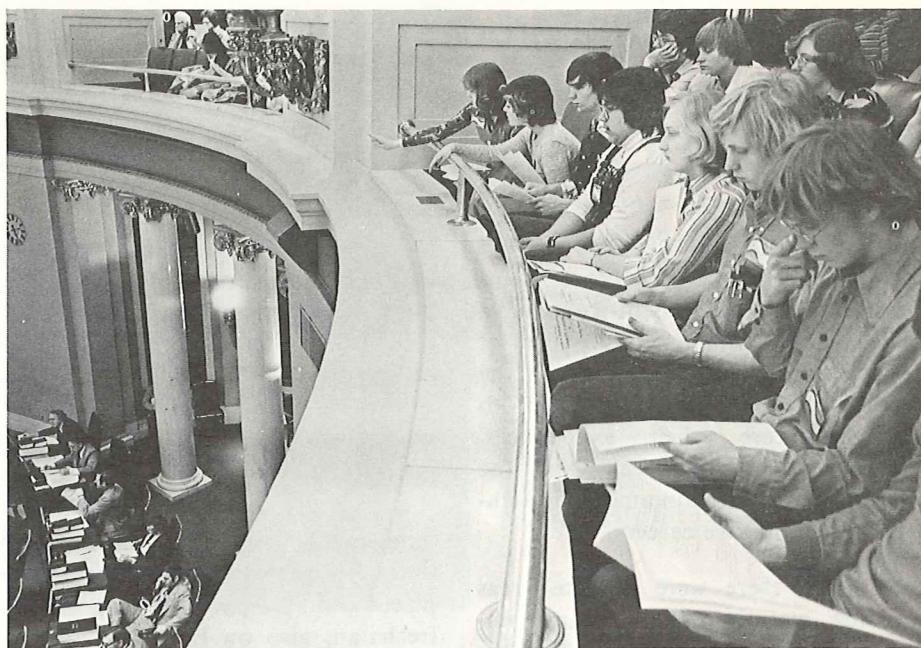


## The Capitol was their classroom

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."

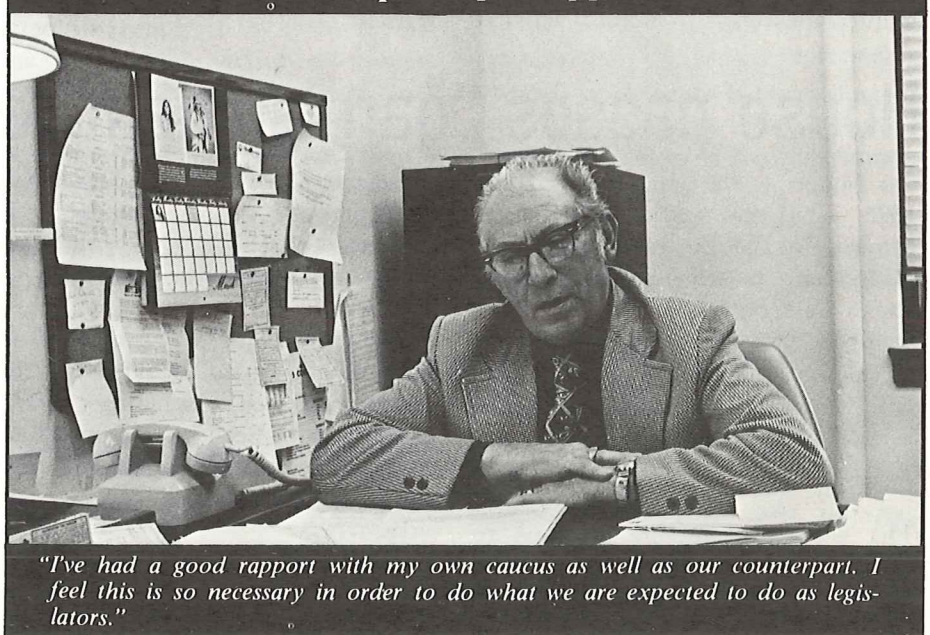
"We didn't have our own telephones. We didn't have our own desks — none of those things at all. I think there have been great improvements."

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

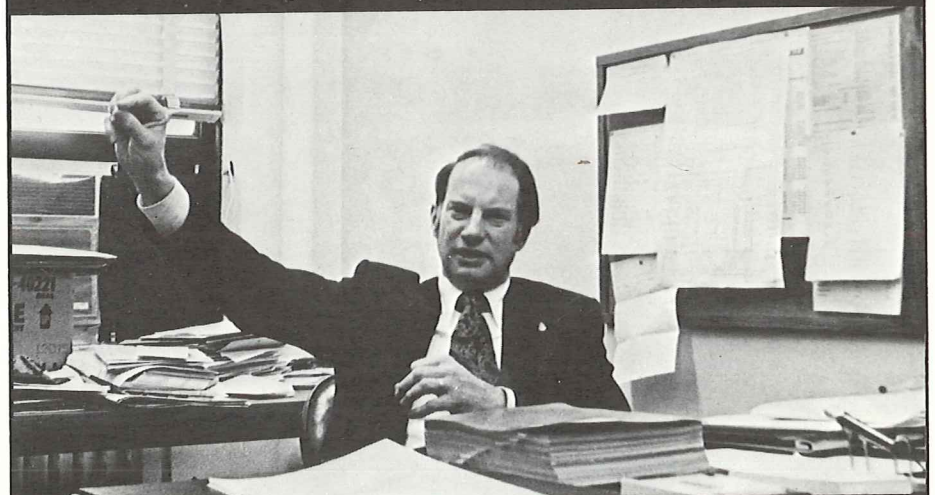
it could defeat the "basic purpose of a legislative act."

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.





# SESSION SCENES

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?

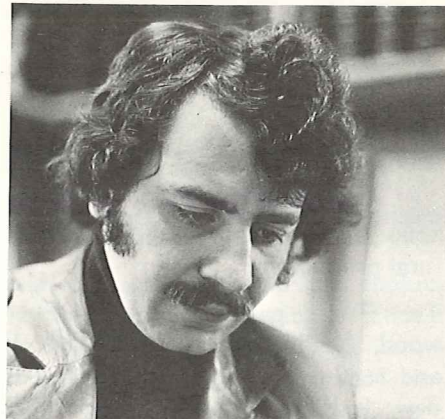
Right now, Minnesota ranks seventh in the nation in total miles of Class I railroad operations in the state — 7,990 miles of track. Over half of these are branch lines, short rail lines that feed into main lines that are more centralized and carry higher traffic loads and which often extend into other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