

Anderson steps down after 18 years

Rep. Glen Anderson's office has an old shoe kind of comfort. The couch slopes where it's been used most. Papers — some neatly stacked, others not — are on the floor, couch, window sill, and desk.

Anderson, the DFLer from Bellingham who represented the area for nearly two decades, says this is his last session. While he may soon be gone from his corner office on the third floor, he won't be forgotten.

"We're going to miss him. I think the institution will be a bit less when he leaves," says Rep. Wayne Simoneau (DFL-Fridley), who succeeded Anderson as chair of the Appropriations Committee. "He knows middle America — middle Minnesota. He has a big, broad view of what's out there."

And Anderson's colleagues are drawing on his expertise for all it's worth in the remaining weeks of the session. During a recent meeting of the Education Division of the Appropriations Committee, for example, Anderson fielded the tough questions on the bonding bill. He did the same thing when the matter was on the House Floor for a vote.

In other division meetings, several lawmakers sought his opinion on education funding matters.

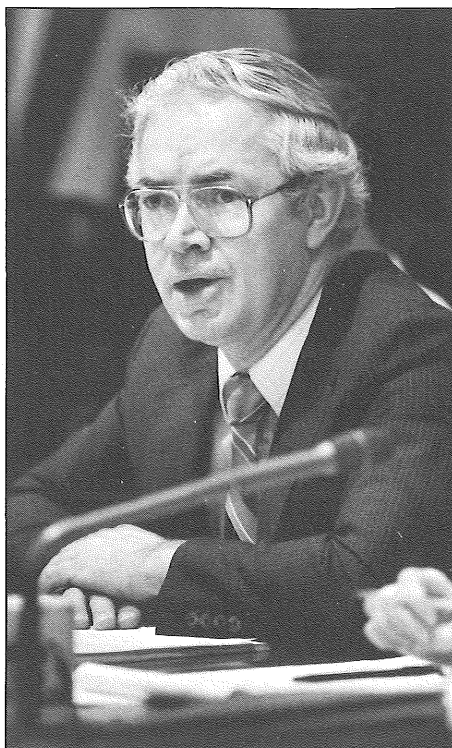
"People know to talk to Glen Anderson," says Simoneau.

"Rep. Anderson is a valuable asset," says Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Crystal), who chairs the Education Division and who was elected to the House the same year as Anderson. "When I worked with him as the chair, he was one who was responsive to the needs of education." People who are as legislatively active as Anderson is are difficult to replace, he says.

Anderson, a third generation farmer from Bellingham, says his decision not to seek a 10th term is "80 to 90 percent financial and 10 to 20 percent emotional.

"I really don't want to leave," he admits. "I love this place very much. I feel good about the time I've been here."

Anderson's resignation as chair came during a swirl of publicity after he pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor charges. The last six months of 1989, he says, was "a bad disaster. I went through



Rep. Glen Anderson

three or four months of pure hell."

He says his trouble began after being roundly chastized by people from his district after pushing for the consolidation of four high schools in his area.

"That hurt; that got to me," Anderson, 51, says. "But I know what I did was good for the young people. I know it was good for the taxpayers. I know it was good for education."

The pressure from the public's wrath in his home community, in addition to financial problems, contributed to the stress that ultimately led to his troubles with the law.

Now, he adds, "I'm laying back now and rebuilding. I'll do the best I can in the days I've got left here."

For now, he's silent on what the future holds for him. But he knows it won't be far from the business he knows best: politics and government. And he wants his future endeavor to be challenging, demanding, and rewarding.

"I'm interested in doing something that deals with people and government," he says. "I want to work with people. I don't want to shuffle papers."

Though he seldom introduced major

legislation, Anderson says he has been content to informally discuss bonding or appropriation matters in the hallways and offices. He typically works behind the scenes, plotting strategy or offering friendly advice on parliamentary maneuvers.

"He's good at massaging legislation and bringing people together," says Simoneau.

The seeds of his political involvement were sown by his father. But the event that prompted Anderson's running was a Saturday night political rally in which he felt that his state representative was talking down to the crowd. The following Tuesday, Anderson filed to run against the 16-year incumbent.

During his 18 years in public office, Anderson says he has witnessed a profound change in attitudes. Back then, for example, state trails weren't acceptable; now communities work and fight for them, proving that environmentalists and recreation enthusiasts can co-exist, he says.

Anderson's only real criticism of the Legislature is that not enough of his colleagues take the long-range view of what's best for Minnesota.

"I've generally tried to look at what's best for [the state] five, 10, or 20 years down the road, rather than what's best for me to get re-elected," he says.

Anderson says he has changed as well. He has adopted a more liberal stance regarding environmental matters and also views legislation from a statewide — as opposed to a purely parochial — viewpoint.

Although the annals of political lore are littered with tales of backstabbing and double-crosses, Anderson says he will retire with a clear conscience.

"I can't think of a soul I was dishonest with or unfair to. I've been honest, sincere, and dedicated. I don't think anybody can argue that."

He advises his successor to vote his or her convictions.

"Don't sell yourself out. If you can live with your vote in your heart, then you don't have to worry about the caucus or special interest groups. You have to be able to live with yourself."