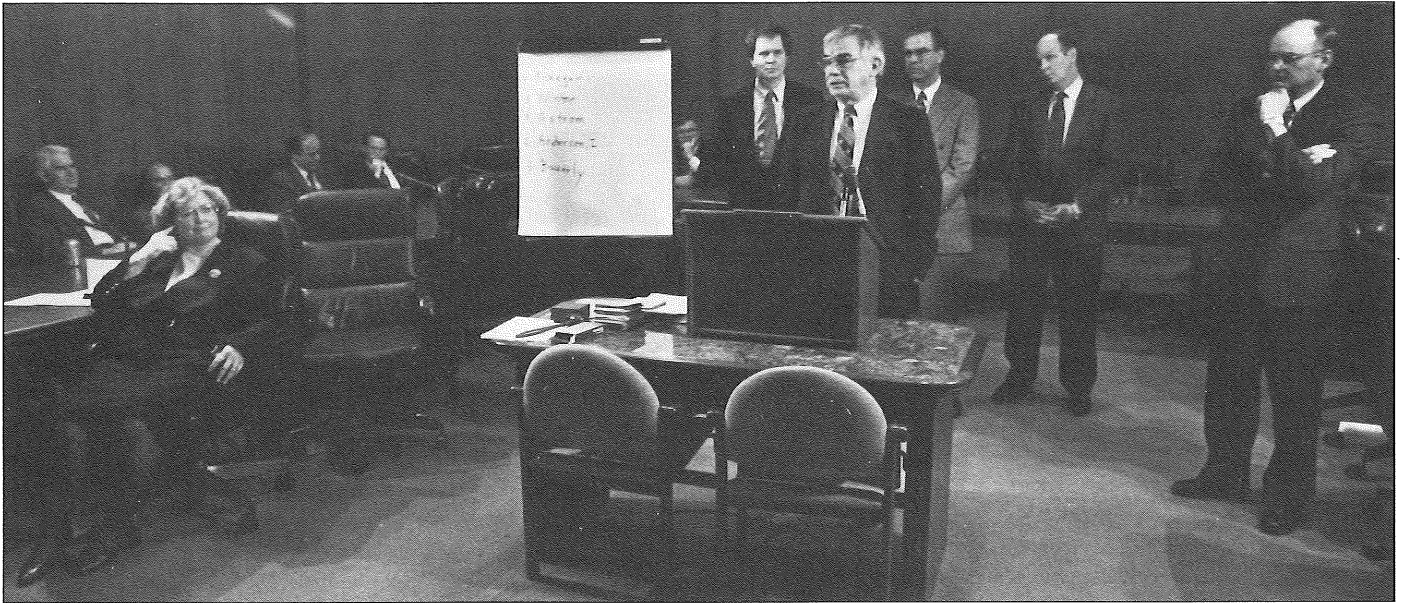


Highlights



Rep. Irv Anderson, center, answered a question from a DFL caucus member just prior to his March 25 election as house majority leader. Looking on were House Speaker Dee Long and the four other candidates for the post, Reps. Don Ostrom, left, Rick Krueger, Ted Winter and Jerry Bauerly, right.

DFL selects Anderson as new majority leader

A long week of political tumult ended March 25 with House DFLers going back to the future — electing Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) as the new majority leader.

Anderson's election on a 44-42 vote came two days after Rep. Alan Welle (DFL-Willmar) announced he would be stepping down from his leadership post effective March 29.

Welle resigned after it was disclosed that an estimated \$85,000 in unauthorized calls had been rung up on his House issued long-distance calling card in late 1991. The misuse was not reported to the proper authorities. The case is now under investigation.

Anderson emerged from a field of five candidates for the leadership post, finally defeating Jerry Bauerly of Sauk Rapids after leading on all four ballots taken. Other candidates were Don Ostrom of St. Peter, Rick Krueger of Staples, and Ted Winter of Fulda.

Anderson's election returns him to a role he held for six years before leaving the House in 1982. He was re-elected in 1990, and was runner-up for the majority leader spot when Welle was chosen the following session. Anderson was first elected to House in 1964.

"This is a very difficult time for our caucus and the state of Minnesota," he said. Anderson, now serving his 11th term, vowed to build consensus from the disparate wings of the caucus and restore public confidence in the House.

After his election, Anderson said he plans to draw the caucus together to formulate a legisla-

tive package which will include an alternative to Gov. Arne Carlson's proposed budget.

The spending plan, he said, will likely channel more money to education and local government aids, while keeping agricultural property taxes in check. He said he favors higher income taxes on the state's wealthiest citizens to provide broad property tax relief.

Anderson said he won't necessarily revert to the take-no-prisoners style of floor leadership which some say cost him the House speakership in 1980 — a post he has long sought. "Irv has mellowed," he said, chuckling.

But he will be aggressive, he added, despite the challenge of assuming leadership in mid-session.

The DFL's changing of the guard was only part of the fallout resulting from the phone incident.

The day before Anderson's election, on March 24, a bill (HF1377) was hastily assembled on the House floor to ensure that a similar incident couldn't happen again. It also would provide greater disclosure of expense records for virtually all state officials.

The House voted to take the extraordinary step of introducing and passing the bill in a single floor session, suspending its rules and bypassing the normal legislative process.

Rep. Charlie Weaver (IR-Anoka) called HF1377 a "replica" of an IR proposal, adding: "This is an effort to do what we've been seeking since 1977." After sparring over numerous amendments, the bill ultimately passed on a 131-0 vote.

House Speaker Dee Long (DFL-Mpls) said that

while the DFL and IR proposals were similar, the DFL bill was much broader in scope.

The bill includes provisions that would:

- Open up the legislative process to the public, including a requirement that meeting notices be posted, tapes be made, and voting records be made public. That is already House practice, Long said, but the bill gives it the force of law to protect that disclosure in the future. The IR proposal would have applied the state's Open Meeting Law to the Legislature, which is exempt from its provisions. Long said that would have raised serious constitutional issues. The Legislature, however, already does have a separate open meeting law (M.S.3.055) requiring that its hearings be open to the public.
 - Set and disclose the budgets of the House, Senate, constitutional offices and commissions just as they are for executive departments. Again, that is already House practice that is getting legal backing, Long said. The IR bill only applied to the Legislature, she said.
 - Make the phone bills of legislators, constitutional officers and state department heads public information.
 - Strengthen the oversight of phone billing procedures and require detailed expense reports to be filed quarterly by legislators and other state officials.
- HF1377 now moves to the Senate for consideration.

—Jim Anderson