

Anderson eyes future use for Waseca campus

"Man of leisure" was a short-lived phase for Rep. Richard Anderson, the newly elected Independent-Republican from Waseca. Anderson had been retired for less than a year when he jumped into the political contest to represent District 30B in the House.

"I had hoped, in retirement, that there would be some time to pick up my duck hunting," recalls Anderson, who succeeds former Rep. Jeff Conway.

Instead, Anderson and his wife, Jean, are in an apartment near the Capitol, ready for the real work to begin.

Education and agriculture rank among Anderson's top concerns. And that's not surprising given his work the past 20 years: he was superintendent of the University of Minnesota-Waseca's agricultural experiment station.

Anderson says he's baffled by the University of Minnesota's decision to close the Waseca campus — a decision, he adds, that "moved forward without proper discussion."

But if the decision proves to be

irrevocable, Anderson says he hopes the campus can be converted for another educational use — perhaps as a part of the State University System.

This session, he says, enhancing the quality of Minnesota's educational system should be among the top priorities when wrestling with the projected budget shortfall.

He says he's pleased with the committee assignments he has received. In addition to being named to the Education Committee, he's also serving on the Agriculture Committee, both among his top choices.

Farming is important to rural Waseca, and to the whole state — a fact, according to Anderson, that is often forgotten as farmers' numbers continue to shrink.

"Cumulatively, it is still Minnesota's number one industry," he says. "We tend to think of agriculture only in terms of production." And since there are fewer people involved in that, he says "they are regarded as politically insignificant."

Like many of his freshman colleagues, Anderson says he plans to spend a great deal of time observing the process.



Richard Anderson

District: 30B

Age: 64

Home: Waseca

Occupation: Retired

District traits: Contains portions of Dodge, Steele, Mower, Freeborn, and Waseca counties in southern Minnesota. The district's largest city is Waseca.

Service important to former Peace Corps worker

Stepping into a new environment and working for the common good is a specialty for Rep. Larry Bodahl (DFL-Waconia).

"I think we should all give back as much as we can in service," says the former Peace Corps volunteer and ex-mayor of Waconia.

Bodahl started his career in public service in Jamaica with his wife, Jane, where they served a two-year stint with the Peace Corps. He also worked as a city planner in Oregon before returning to their native Minnesota.

Bodahl then spent 14 years working in local government starting with a city planning job in Victoria, Minn.

"But a week later the administrator left and I filled in the position," recalls Bodahl. "So I spent the next 12 years as city administrator before I was elected mayor of Waconia in 1987."

When a constituent asked the then-mayor if he had ever considered running for state office, Bodahl says he "seized the moment."

The opportunity to step into state government, says Bodahl, just seemed right.

District 35B voters agreed and turned out seven-term member K.J. McDonald, a colorful Independent-Republican known for his oratory.

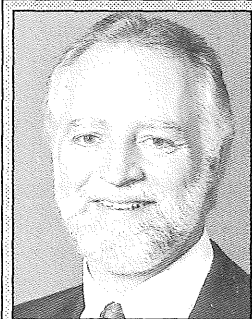
Now, Bodahl is drawing on his experience in local government to help benefit his diverse constituency on the state level.

With a district that runs the gamut from high-income, white-collar professionals to rural family farmers, good representation requires a thoughtful approach, says Bodahl.

"I'm looking to my background to be able to be empathetic to all sides. My agenda is not point-specific, special-interest," he says. "I'm not here to dismantle, I'm here to improve."

Formulating a long-term energy policy for Minnesota is one area where Bodahl hopes to contribute as a member of the Energy Committee.

"That's a sign of the times," he says. "In the '70s we had very strong energy policies that we let slide in the '80s. It's being revisited."



Larry Bodahl

District 35B

Age: 43

Home: Waconia

Occupation: Strategic planning consultant

District traits: Contains parts of Scott and Carver counties to the south and west of Minneapolis. The district is both agricultural and suburban, taking in the town of Norwood and the southwestern tip of Lake Minnetonka.