

Family concerns prod Farrell to seek office

Rep. Jim Farrell (DFL-St. Paul) was a House page in 1977 and continues to work as a Ramsey County public defender, but neither of those experiences served as the catalyst to get him to the Minnesota House.

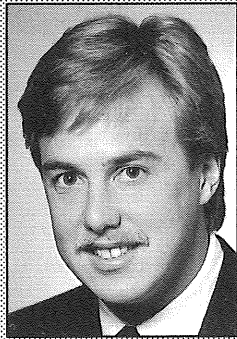
Instead, it was the death of his father in 1989, and the subsequent troubles experienced by his mother, that spurred him to enter the race in District 67A.

"When my dad died, my whole world changed," says Farrell. "All of a sudden I had a mother who was extremely dependent on my father . . . she never drove and she hadn't worked in over 30 years. We discovered there were going to be problems with getting his railroad pension, as well as problems with her getting health insurance because of her severe arthritis. Suddenly people told me to quit complaining about what was happening to my mom and do something.

"That's when I said, 'Alright, I'll run.'"

Now that he's a state lawmaker, Farrell says he'll work to iron out some of the glitches in the system so others won't suffer the same experience his mother did.

And problems with pensions and health care are probably greater in his district than many others, he says. It's a



Jim Farrell

District 67A

Age: 30

Home: St. Paul

Occupation: Ramsey County public defender

District traits: 67A includes a large portion of St. Paul's working class. The heavily DFL district voted for Dukakis-Bentsen over Bush-Quale by a 71.3-percent-to-28.7-percent margin in 1988.

blue collar neighborhood — one that he describes as a cross between the Iron Range and northeast Minneapolis — where many breadwinners once worked for employers such as Whirlpool, which has since closed its St. Paul plant.

And many of the residents are older. Farrell says the average age of people who voted in the 1990 primary was about 50. Many people in his district are concerned with the cost of health insurance — particularly the cost of supplemental insurance to cover what Medicare and Medicaid doesn't, he says.

With about 3,000 union households in his district, Farrell says workers' compensation is also a big issue with his constituents. Like most Minnesotans, the district is also concerned about education and

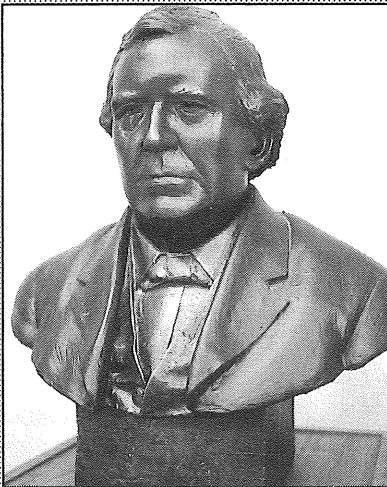
housing.

Although it was the troubles his mother experienced that led him to elective office, it isn't as if his stint as a House page wasn't interesting, says Farrell.

He recalls listening to a "hot" 1977 debate on the House floor about gun control when a member summoned a page.

"I remember being so mad because I couldn't listen. I thought he was going to ask me to get research or something . . . but instead, I had to go get an ice cream sandwich for him."

Farrell says he's glad members can no longer eat on the floor so this session's pages won't suffer a similar indignity.



The bust of Ignatius Donnelly stands in the north wing of the Capitol.

It's a fact!

Ignatius Donnelly was unelectable during the final 30 years of his life. Still, the "Sage of Nininger" was renowned nationally as the voice of rural populism during the reform-minded 1870s and '80s.

Ousted from his seat in Congress in 1869 by his one-time mentor, Alexander Ramsey, Donnelly retaliated by taking on the railroad, lumber, and milling interests then ruling the state.

And as a perennial — but often reluctant — candidate for Congress, he led a slate of state lawmakers who approved some of the country's first anti-monopoly laws and helped spark the Greenback, Populist, and Fusionist movements.

Although Donnelly is remembered as a radical, he began his career in the political mainstream. His first elective office was as Ramsey's lieutenant governor.