

New members . . .

Pellow emerges after reprieve; returns for third term

A lot full of mangled and misfit automobiles may be an odd place to uncover an interest in politics. But out from under the



Rep. Dick Pellow

heaps of metal arose Rep. Dick Pellow's law-making aspirations.

Pellow's childhood dreams never entailed wearing a tie, shaking hands on a campaign trail, or sitting through long debates on the House floor. Thoughts

of fast cars, greasy engines, and socket wrenches filled his head.

"I was a greaser, a car nut. Growing up, I ate and slept cars," he said. At the age of 15, he repaired and painted his first car, a 1936 Ford four-door.

Today, Pellow has plenty of ties, lots of opinions about government, a desk on the House floor, literally tons of automobiles, and 20 antique cars.

The 63-year-old Independent-Republican from New Brighton realized his youthful wish. He owns an auto broker company that sells wrecked cars to salvage yards and another company that buys, sells, and repairs tow trucks.

But what he didn't know when he entered the auto broker business was that it would eventually lead him to the Capitol in St. Paul.

"I saw what government was doing to business," he said. "The taxes, the over regulation, the bureaucracy. I wanted to get involved."

In the early days, Pellow called himself a "typical businessman in politics."

He started out working on campaigns for fellow Republicans such as former Rep. Tony Bennett's run for a House seat in the late 1960s. Pellow, who was raised in a DFL/union worker household, was Bennett's yard sign chairperson.

"I never had time to run myself and make the commitment. I had my family and the business. But I knew that I couldn't change zip without becoming a lawmaker. You gotta come down here where the action is," said Pellow, who represented the New Brighton area (just north of St. Paul) from 1988 to 1992. He lost a re-election bid in 1992 only to come back again in 1994.

Pellow said he plans to continue where he left off in 1992. "I want to cut as much bureaucracy as we can cut.

Get government out of people's business and downsize the bureaucracy . . . Businesses have to hire accountants and bookkeepers just to keep track of the new government regulations."

He'd like to cut the Metropolitan Council and its 17 council members which plan and coordinate the development of airports, parks, roads, and other regional issues for the seven-county metropolitan area. The council's authority encompasses 100 cities and the council has a staff of about 150 employees.

Pellow said he'd like to have the metro area cities each have a volunteer representative on a regional planning board and use that board to make decisions and share resources.

Pellow said government gets involved where it shouldn't and wastes money. Two examples of that, he said, are the traffic lights on freeway ramps and the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Highway Helper Program, which is designed to help motorists who are stranded on the highway.

He said he also plans to reintroduce a bill that would cut the earnings of county commissioners in the state to match those of legislators. In 1994, state lawmakers earned \$27,979.

Hennepin County commissioners will earn about \$69,000 a year in 1995; Ramsey County commissioners, about \$41,000.

In addition to those issues, Pellow said he would also like to focus on two long-time IR priorities: cutting workers' compensation rates and lowering commercial and industrial property taxes.

With only eight members making up the difference between the majority (DFL) party and the minority (IR) party in the House, Pellow thinks the IRs have a good shot at getting their agenda to the House floor.

— K. Darcy Hanzlik

It's a fact!

A portrait of Abraham Lincoln hangs in the State Dining Hall of the White House.

But that painting used to hang above the speaker's desk in the Minnesota House chamber.

In 1864, President Lincoln sat for a portrait done by George P. Healy, an eminent artist of the time. A copy of the painting was given to Robert Todd Lincoln, and another to Elihu Washburn, an intimate friend of the president's.

Robert Todd Lincoln said they were the finest likenesses of his father ever painted.

The Washburn family later moved to Minnesota, and shortly after the existing State Capitol was completed in 1905, W.D. Washburn loaned the portrait to the state. It was placed above the speaker's desk, where it hung until 1932. At that time, heirs of the Washburns requested that the painting be sent to them in New York City. Later, Jacqueline Kennedy acquired the painting when she was redecorating the White House.

But before relinquishing the original, the state commissioned Edward Brewer of St. Paul to paint a replica of the portrait. The copy is so exact that some say experts can't tell the difference between it and the original.

Brewer's copy now hangs above the speaker's desk in the House chamber.



Abraham Lincoln, as painted by Edward Brewer of St. Paul

District 52B

Population: 32,877
Distribution: 100 percent in urban areas
County: Ramsey
Largest city: New Brighton
Location: north Metro
Unemployment rate: 4.15 percent
Residents living below poverty level: 6.57 percent
1992 presidential election results:
Bush/Quayle 31.98 percent
Clinton/Gore 44.20 percent
Perot/Stockdale 22.84 percent
Other: 0.98 percent