

## Renner takes oath as D.A., labels self 'conservative'

A former defender of indigents who describes himself as "conservative" about law enforcement took office Tuesday as U.S. District attorney for Minnesota.

He is Robert G. Renner, of Walker, appointed to the post by President Nixon. Renner, a seven-term member of the Minnesota Legislature, resigned yesterday.

Renner was described by Judge Edward J. Devitt, who administered the oath, as a "country lawyer, a term of great honor."

Renner himself described his practice in Walker as "mixed," including most kinds of legal work. He was frequently appointed by courts to represent indigents accused of felonies before the state public defender system was established.

He was one of the authors of the bill establishing the system, "because I felt indigents were entitled to more than the state was giving them then." (There were limitations on what work the state would pay an appointed defense lawyer.)

How, says Renner, "we've reached the other extreme. The public defenders are becoming so able some of the part-time county attorneys out in the state can't compete with them."

The answer to that problem is the district prosecutor system now still in the pilot stage. Renner says he sponsored the bill in the 1967 legislature which authorized the system, under which a full-time prosecutor in judicial districts give advice to county attorneys and sometimes handles prosecutions for them.

So far the system has been established only in the fifth and ninth districts.

Renner who also was a sponsor of the 1963 revised criminal code and the 1967 law making prostitution a gross misdemeanor, says he believes good criminal legislation "protects the little man. The big man can buy protection from crime," Renner said, "but the little man needs the freedom from fear that only the law can give him."