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Perspectives

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STATE CAPITOL

A Publication about the Minnesota State Senate

Senate night sessions
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More will occur in coming weeks.



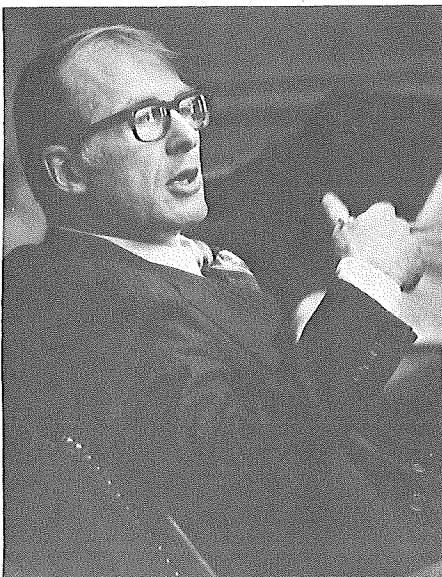


Tax increment financing: renaissance or 'rip-off'?

by Sara Meyer

It has been called an ingenious financing mechanism to help cities pay for redevelopment of blighted areas, but it has also been called a taxpayer rip-off that uses public funds to subsidize private investment. It has been hailed a success in several Minnesota localities where redevelopment projects are well on their way to self-sufficiency, but it is visibly struggling for survival in two of the largest development districts in Minneapolis.

"Tax-increment financing" is a redevelopment financing tool that is a subject of controversy among people in business and in government, and a subject of incomprehension among much of the public.



During the 1978 legislative session, the Minnesota Senate is taking a hard look at the issue of tax-increment financing in hopes of tightening up the state's tax-increment financing laws.

What it is

In 1969 the legislature gave cities an opportunity to capture property tax revenues specifically for redevelopment purposes. It works like this: A tax increment district is set up and its boundaries are defined. The county auditor determines the dollar value of all taxable property within the district before development. (This is the base value.) Then the city sells general obligation bonds to pay for certain "front end" costs — land acquisition, demolition of existing structures, and the installation of sidewalks, sewers, public utilities, etc. At this point the city hopes to sell the land, at a bargain rate, to private developers who will arrange for construction on the improved site. Property taxes on the site go up as development proceeds, and the city captures this incremental growth in property taxes.

"Legitimate and necessary"

Proponents of tax-increment financing say that governmental financing of redevelopment is legitimate and necessary. They agree that there are risks associated with it, but claim that it is preferable to the blight that will remain if nothing is done.

Sen. Jack Davies, at left, is among the critics of tax increment financing.

Since the end of W.W. II, the federal government has participated in urban development by offering loans and grants to cities for construction and renovation. But during the last decade, many of these programs were dismantled and have been replaced by revenue-sharing and block grants to localities. A large share of these funds goes to the suburbs, and cities have had to rely on some other means to fund redevelopment. Tax-increment financing became one of the sources cities relied on.

Supporters of tax-increment financing argue that the government/private cooperation in re-development is similar to the widely accepted cooperation between the two sectors in initial development. Government has traditionally facilitated private development through building roads, sewers and other support facilities. In effect, they say, government has always provided the investment necessary to make private development possible, so the same principle should apply to re-development.

But there are problems

Although local government officials are eager to defend it as a sound redevelopment financing tool, tax-increment financing has been criticized on several counts. It has become clear that private investment doesn't always follow public investment. The Nicollet-Lake and Loring Park redevelopment districts in Minneapolis are examples of this. In two of the city's largest development districts little tax increment has been generated. Land has been left vacant in Loring Park for so long that the district's assessed value in recent years has actually been lower than the value of its taxable property before



A vast expanse of cleared land (above) awaits redevelopment in the Loring Redevelopment district. At right: Sign promising 201 apartments.

development began. Thus tax-increment financing may actually reduce a city's taxable value during the time after the old buildings are torn down and before the new buildings are constructed. And even if nothing new is built and the land lies vacant, the city must still repay its bonds on time. In some cases increased property taxes may be required to pay off the tax-increment bonds during the period before the new construction is on the tax rolls. Critics of tax-increment financing say that an impression is created that it costs the taxpayer nothing, when in fact property taxes may be raised to pay off the city's bonds.

Sen Jack Davies (DFL-Mpls.), the most outspoken Senate critic of tax-increment financing, says that this is one area where government and business don't mix. Davies argues that tax-increment financing doesn't really attract any **new** business, and several members of the Senate subcommittee working on the bill said they feel that the tool is being used in too many cases where development probably would have occurred anyway.

Tightening up the law

The Senate subcommittee on Tax-Increment Financing, chaired by Sen. Marvin Hanson (DFL-Hallock), has worked out the details of the senate bill as follows:

Three types of projects would be able to make use of tax-increment financing: 1) Redevelopment projects — those which must be located within generally blighted areas that have been designated a "public improvement district," or areas that are extremely costly to prepare for development; 2) Housing projects — only those for low and moderate income



persons; and 3) Economic Development Projects — those that add to the tax base or in some way improve the local economy by construction of improvements.

Each of the three types of permissible projects has a different time constraint during which tax increments can be taken from the project. This means that bonds must be repaid within a period of ten years for economic development projects, twenty years for redevelopment projects and twenty-five years for housing projects. Economic development projects have a shorter time limit under the Senate bill because these projects would generally involve land that is already clear of buildings.

Hearings required

A procedure for public hearings and appropriate agency approval is also established in the bill. Detailed plans on the proposed tax-increment project would have to be presented to school boards, county boards, the State Planning Agency, the Metropolitan Council, and the municipal planning commission for comment, and the project would be subject to final approval by the city council.

An important feature of the new bill is the requirement that tax-increment projects be approved only after a large portion of the project is under contract with developers. This would insure that publicly improved land would not lie vacant for excessive periods of time, and would also discourage the use of luring future developers. The new law would require that 85 per cent of the project area be under contract.

An additional restriction on the use of tax-increment financing would be that a project's cost could not exceed a certain percentage of the total taxable value of property in the municipality. The Senate measure provides a sliding scale to determine this percentage, which ranges from a two to ten percent maximum.

The House and Senate measures are comparable in general purpose and in their restricting features. A few compromises of a technical nature will need to be made in conference committee, and it is expected that the bill will be acted on before the end of the session.

Problem out in open

More aid sought for battered victims

by Karen Clark

The incidence of battered women, of child abuse, of family violence as a whole has only begun to gain national attention as a problem of almost epidemic proportions. Until recently such issues were simply not acknowledged to exist. The Minnesota Legislature, however, has both recognized and then enacted laws to deal with two major areas of family violence. In 1974 the legislature passed the Child Abuse Act and in 1977 The Battered Women Law was passed and signed into law.

"Incidence staggering"

Sen. B. Robert Lewis (DFL-St. Louis Park), sponsor of the Battered Women Law is convinced though, that more needs to be done. "We are finding the same things we found in 1974 after the child abuse law went into effect, that by requiring people to report abuse, the number of incidents of abuse is staggering." Lewis also acknowledges that one of the major difficulties in dealing with problems such as spouse abuse is the lack of concrete data, of knowing just how extensive the problem is. "One estimate," he said, "finds that the incidence of battered women may be very high — perhaps as many as three or four of every 10 women have been beaten at least once."

Sen. B. Robert Lewis, sponsor of legislation to aid battered women.



A report issued by a United Way Task Force on Battered Women seems to agree, asserting that "physical abuse of women by husbands, boyfriends or ex-mates occurs more frequently than commonly believed." As an indication of the scope of the problem, the report goes on to say that "in 1976, the Minneapolis police estimated they had 2000 reports of spouse abuse." The report also concludes that although battered women were more likely to be low income, separated or divorced, non-white and less educated, many battered women were of higher incomes, well educated, white and married. In short, battering occurs in all segments of the community.

Profile needed

In addition to information about battered women, Lewis says, "We need a profile of the batterer." There are indications in the United Way study that in a high percentage of cases the abuser was unemployed or chemically dependent. Lewis also noted that "often the batterer has been abused as a child."

The bill passed during the 1977 Session addresses the information gathering problem directly by mandating data collection on the part of police and hospital personnel. In a bill, again sponsored by Lewis, amending the original Battered Women Law, provisions are included for additional agencies to collect summary data and for the evaluation of the data collected.

But knowing the scope of the problem is only one part of the total area of concern. Shelters and emergency services to help victims of spouse abuse are necessary. A number of shelters have been established in various parts of the state but without a stable source of funding. The Battered Women Law included a provision for state funding of four such shelters to act as a pilot program. The United Way report states that "many more shelters and emergency services are needed — the current demand is about four times the present capacity." The bill amending the Battered Women Law would allow the commissioner of corrections to establish more than the original four shelters if funds are available.

The need for shelters and other related social services is of importance, Lewis said "because of the social stigma that exists if a woman leaves her family." He pointed out that many women are first overcome with guilt, assuming blame for the beatings, and then bewildered when faced with the dilemma of becoming economically self-supporting. "It is still more difficult for women to be as independent as men," he stated, citing lack of job skills as an example of the major obstacles women face when forced to leave home.

Present procedures ineffective

Another large area of concern to those attempting to deal with family violence is the legal system and its response to such cases. In many instances, according to the United Way report, "present legal procedures are often ineffective for many battered women." In addition, stated the report "police officers appear to vary in their response to calls from assaulted women." Testimony taken at informal hearings held during the interim on the implementation of the Battered Women Law indicated that many people — victims, social service personnel and law enforcement personnel — were frustrated by the lack of clearly defined guidelines when trying to get aid for or respond to the needs of battered women.

A bill, introduced this year by Lewis, attempts to settle questions of court jurisdiction and the proper role of law enforcement agencies in handling cases of abuse. The bill is designed, said Lewis, "to take over where the current bill leaves off." He added, though, that because of the time constraints under which the Legislature is operating this session, he didn't think the bill would gain passage this year. However, parts of the bill are contained in other bills that have been introduced. S.F. 318, authored by Sen. William McCutcheon (DFL-St. Paul), for instance, would allow police to arrest a person suspected of assaulting a spouse or other member of his/her family if there is probable cause to believe that assault has occurred. The bill would also give the policeman the option of issuing a citation to appear in court. The measure was then approved by the Judiciary Committee and will soon be heard on the Senate floor.

Lewis, for his part, plans to continue sponsoring legislation that would address the needs of victims of family violence. Speaking of the Battered Women Law, he stated, "the more I worked on it, the more support I received." He indicated that now that there is more public awareness of the problems of family violence there will be a need for more legislation to address the issue. "I intend to pursue it," he said, "until we take care of the problem."

Staff profile: Senate Counsel

by Dave Peterson

Perhaps the most publicly visible of all Senate staff members are the eight men and four women who serve as Senate Counsel — they sit at the side of each committee chairman at each committee meeting; they frequently are called upon to testify at committee meetings or to brief committee members on complicated legal aspects of pending legislation; they work closely with Senators on virtually every bill from the initial draft to final amendments.

And there is even a seat set aside in the Senate chamber so that Counsel can assist with any final matters that may come up on the Senate floor.

If a poll were taken, most Senators would probably agree that Senate Counsel is indispensable. Or if not indispensable, pretty difficult to get along without.

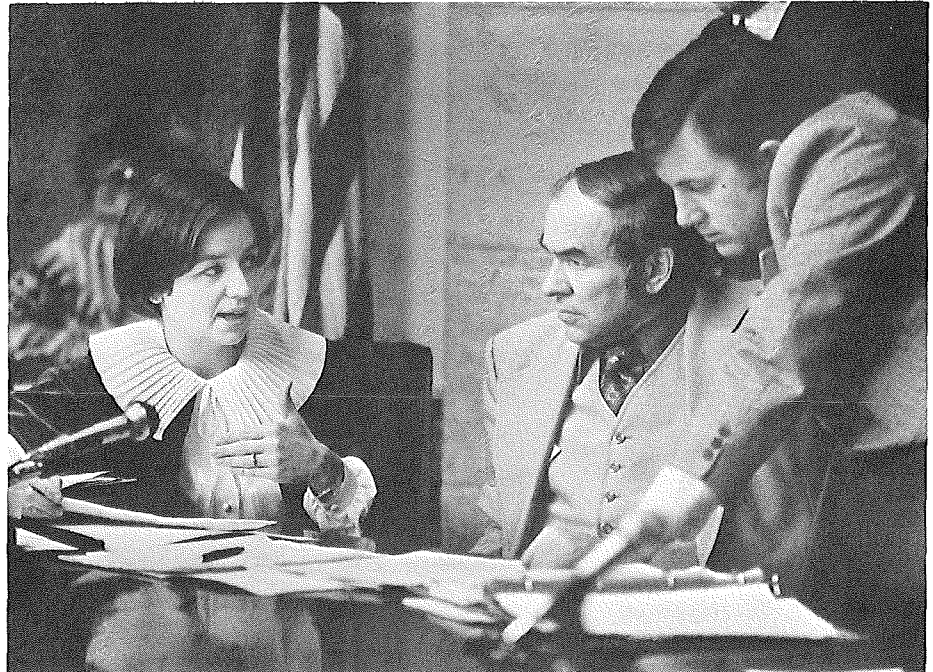
Began in 1967

But like many other areas of legislative staffing, the unit did not exist a dozen years ago. The first person to be named Senate Counsel was Blair Klein, who was appointed in 1967 after having first served as a clerk to the Judiciary Committee.

According to Tom Triplett, who serves as coordinator for the office, Counsel staffing grew as functions were added. One of the chief functions that has contributed to the increase is the fact that Counsel now assists Senators in bill drafting from the very start — a function previously handled by the Office of Revisor of Statutes. With over 2,200 bills introduced in the 1977-78 Session so far, this function alone is substantial.



Tom Triplett, above.



Above right: Jo Anne Zoff, Counsel for the Tax Committee, confers with Senators William McCutcheon and Gene Merriam.

Involved with policy

"Gradually over the years, we've also become more involved with policy concepts," said Triplett. "A few years ago, initial research and drafts of legislation were done in the revisor's office. But because of our close contact with committees and the policy issues they face, Senators began turning to Counsel earlier and more frequently." This trend has been solidified by increased interaction with Senate Research — the group of professional researchers who investigate issues and problems. Triplett said that interaction with Senate Research has also been increased simply because the two offices are now in close physical proximity.

Is there any danger of duplicating or overlapping?

Not really, says Triplett. "Senate Research looks into broad areas — for general facts, trends and so on. Counsel becomes involved more when the facts are known and the question of specific legislative remedy is asked. But I think a person has to know something about the general problem before he or she can be much of a help in drafting legislation."

Triplett said that current staffing levels are determined by the number of Senate Standing Committees (which total 15).

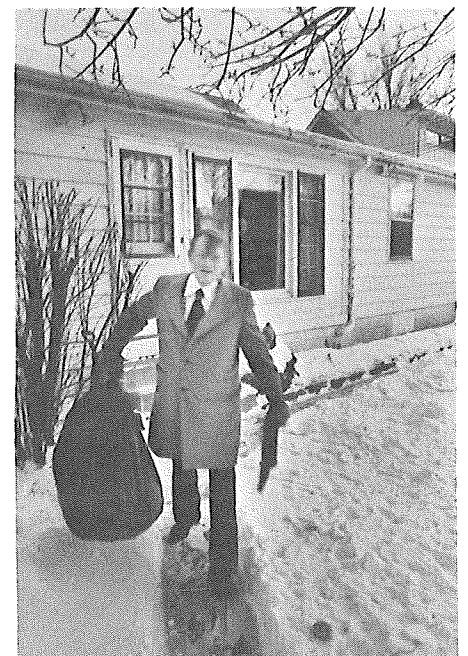
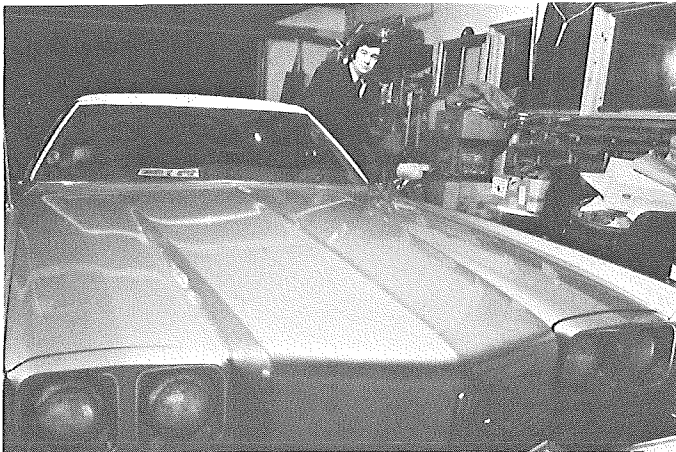
With 12 lawyers, it is possible for one to be assigned to each committee with some doubling up on less active committees.

Five functions

There are five principal functions served by Senate Counsel: (1) to provide assistance in bill drafting; (2) to research statutes and legal issues potentially involved in legislation; (3) to serve as general counsel to all standing committees and subcommittees; (4) to represent the Senate if the legislature is involved in any litigation; and (5) to provide some help with certain constituent problems Senators face — such as answering questions about state agencies or laws.

According to Triplett, most persons serving in Senate Counsel are young lawyers who have recently graduated from law school. Four of the 12 lawyers have had other legal experience prior to their Senate assignments. "We tell potential candidates two things — first, that we want them to stay at least two or three years; and second, that we don't conceive of service in Senate Counsel as a permanent career position." Thus far those who have come to work in Senate Counsel have stayed an average of five to six years. Of the current staff, Peter Wattson is the most experienced, having served seven years while three others are only in their second legislative session.

A DAY IN THEIR LIVES



Editor's note:

Sometimes it seems that the collective nature of the "Senate" or the "Legislature" overshadows and obscures the fact that the institutions are, after all, composed of individuals.

But the "Senate" in and of itself is only a constitutional concept and 67 empty chairs in a beautiful and historic chamber. The senate comes to life through the lives of its members — members like Senators Gerald Willet (DFL-Park Rapids) and Ronald Sieloff (I-R, St. Paul).

Perspectives chose to follow these two Senators through a typical day during the legislative session — Jan. 31, 1978. The choice of Senators was not totally arbitrary — Willet is a veteran senator who chairs one of the Senate's 15 standing committees; he is a rural legislator from northern Minnesota; and he is a Democrat. Sieloff, on the other hand, is a senate

freshman who served one term in the House of Representatives before being elected to the Senate in 1976; he is an urban legislator from St. Paul; and he is a Republican. The two men were selected because they are illustrative of the diverse backgrounds of the 67 persons who serve in the Minnesota Senate. They are not "typical" — for no one is, but they are "illustrative."

Both Willet's and Sieloff's days were long — packed with committee meetings, appointments, correspondence, and other obligations that fill legislators' days and, sometimes, their evenings.

Photographer Mark Nelson followed Willet through his day while Steve Voeller, a session employee in the public information office, followed Sieloff.

The stories of their days follow.

Their days begin

Sen. Gerald Willet's day began before dawn (top left) as he entered his car. Willet, who rents a room from a family in St. Paul, stopped at a local coffee shop to have breakfast. Sen. Sieloff, who as an urban legislator has all the comforts of home, is able to have breakfast with his family (above left). But like many other husbands he takes the trash out before leaving for the Capitol (above).

Photos by Mark M. Nelson and Steve Voeller

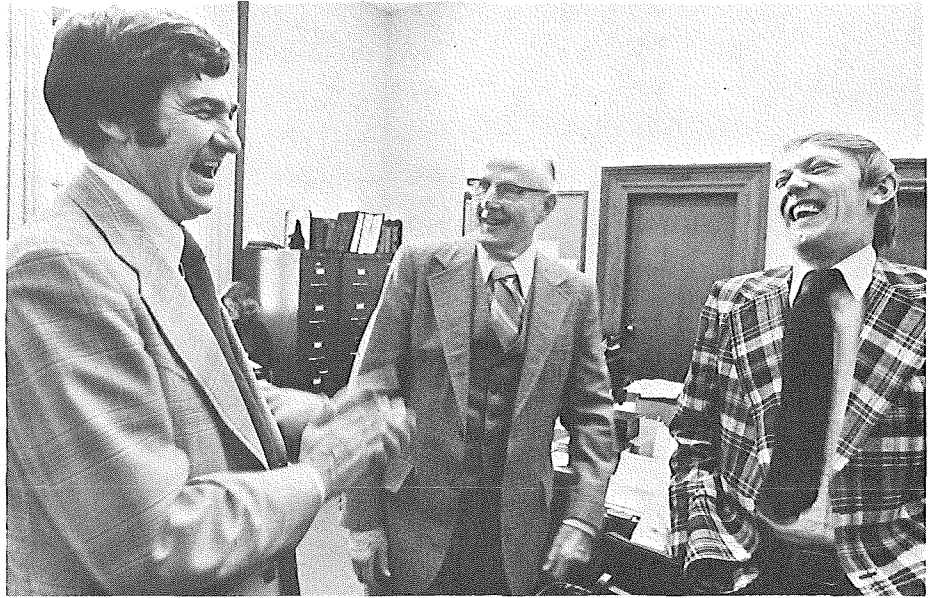


Upon arriving at the Capitol (above top left), Sieloff climbs the stairs to the State Office Building. Outside his office, he discusses a bill (top right), with Sen. Douglas Sillers (I-R, Moorhead). Willet, who arrived at the Capitol early to attend a leadership conference on the powerline problem, makes a point as House Speaker Martin Sabo (DFL-Mpls.) listens (above). Willet and others listen to a colleague; Senate Majority Leader Nicholas Coleman (DFL-St. Paul) is at the left of the photo, Sen. Roger Strand (DFL-Cyrus) and Sen. Wayne Olhoff (DFL-Herman) are pictured at center. At right: Sen. Mel Frederick (I-R, West Concord) listens to a point Sieloff makes about a bill.



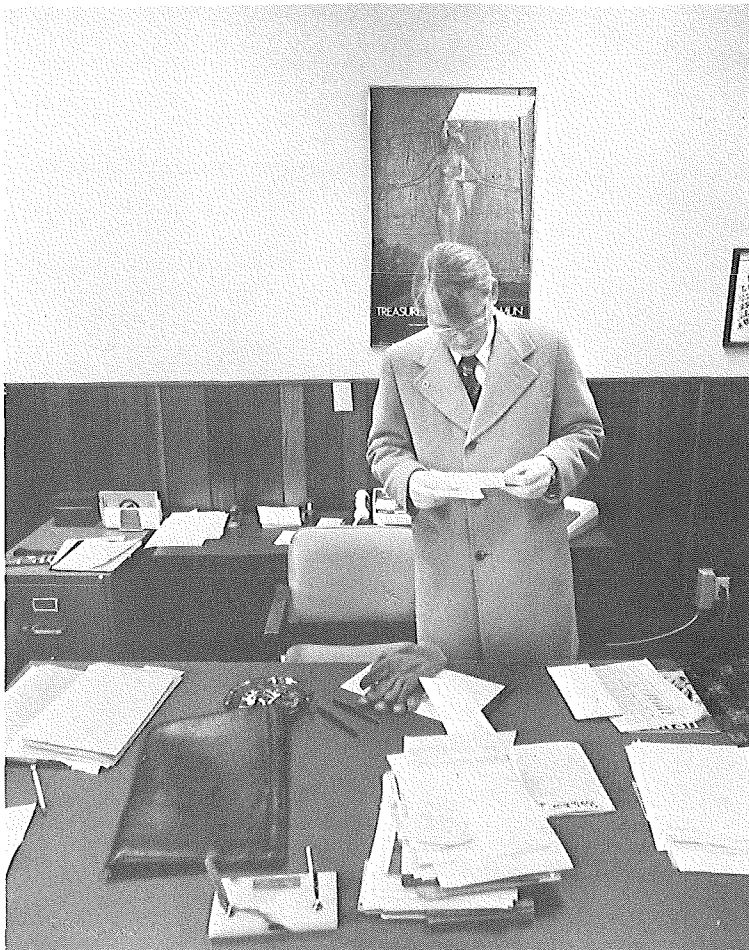


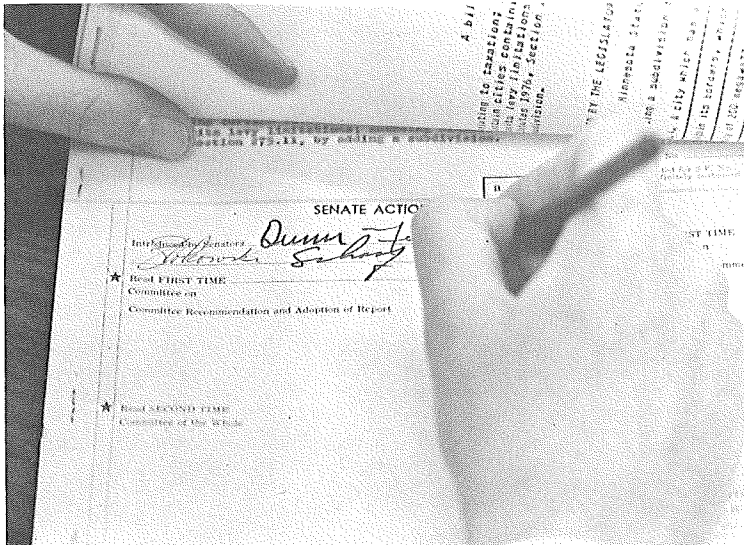
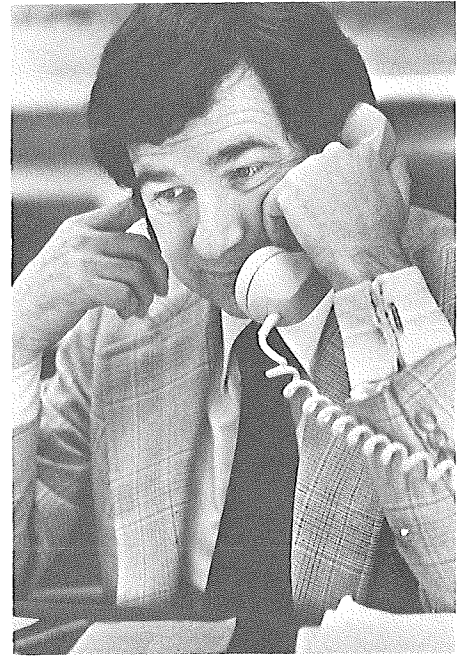
Clockwise from top left: Willet goes over a letter with Committee Secretary Bunny Gordon; Sieloff presents a bill to the Education Committee; Sieloff raises hand to ask a question during Transportation Committee meeting; Willet and Sen. Collin Peterson (DFL-Detroit Lakes) hold press conference to announce a plan to insure citizen input for the Dept. of Natural Resources; and Willet confers with Sen. William Luther (DFL-Brooklyn Center), who chairs one of the Agriculture and Natural Resources subcommittees.



Lunchtime

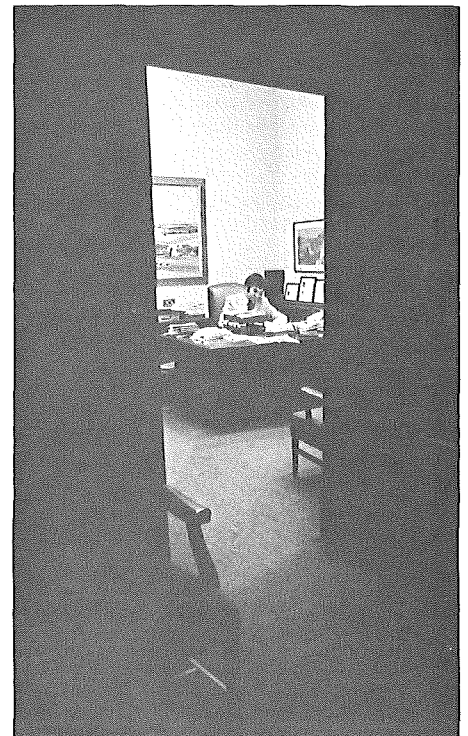
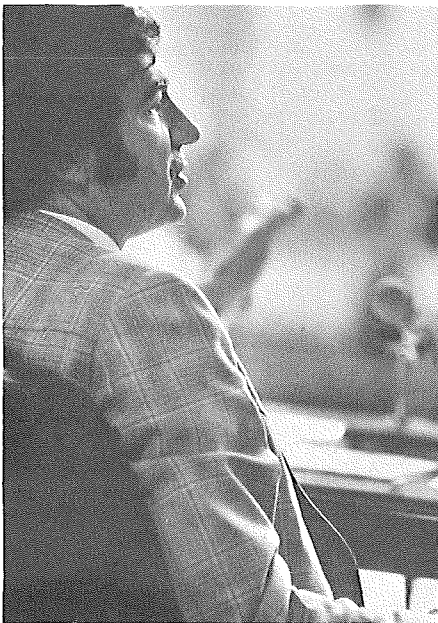
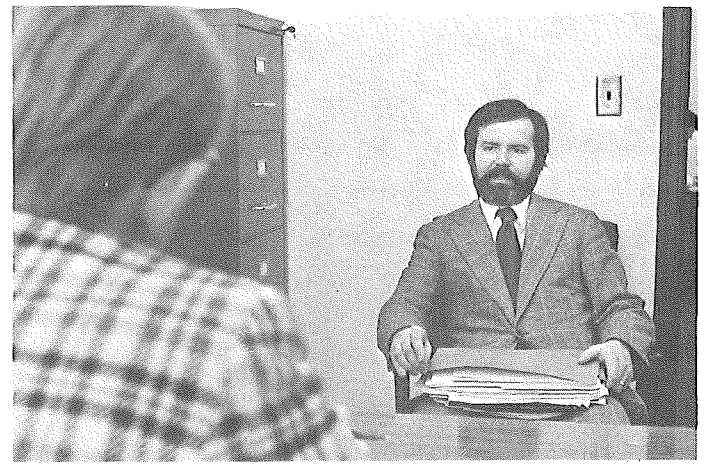
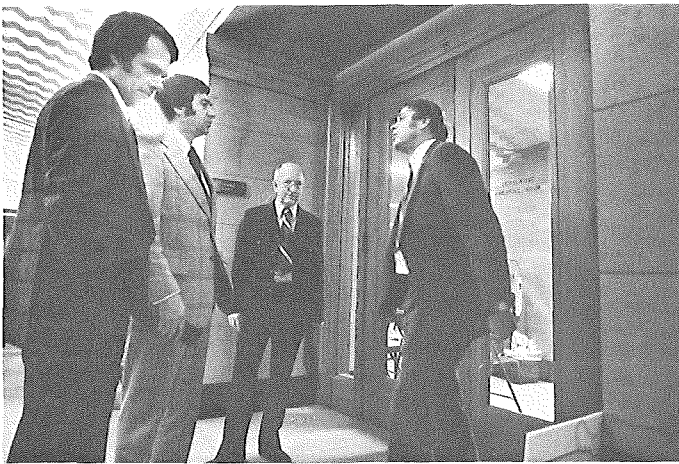
Clockwise from top left: Sieloff grabs a quick lunch in the Transportation Building; Willet enjoys a joke with University of Minnesota Regent L. J. Lee and an unidentified man (left); Sieloff uses free time to scan a newspaper while waiting for a committee; Willet lunches with Senators Robert Benedict (DFL-Bloomington), Doug Johnson (DFL-Cook) and Jerome Gunderson (DFL-Mabel); and Sieloff stops at his law office to check on his mail.





Clockwise from top left: Willet looks over newspaper while conferring with Mike Robertson, committee administrative assistant; Willet phones to talk over a problem with a constituent; Harold Stassen calls upon Sieloff; Sieloff appears pensive as General Legislation Committee discusses Zoo Board nominations; and Sieloff adds his signature as a co-sponsor of a bill.





Clockwise from top left: Willet meets witnesses scheduled to testify before the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, which he chairs; Sieloff uses part of afternoon for individual meetings; Willet (center) and the rest of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee listen to a witness (at podium); Willet in office later in the evening; Willet is recognized at dinner he attended; and Willet listens to testimony at committee meeting earlier in the day.

Opinion

Minority

Editor's note: Various Senators are occasionally asked to contribute opinion pieces on topics of their choosing for this section. Sen. Howard Knutson (I-R, Burnsville) is an Assistant Minority Leader. Sen. Winston Borden (DFL-Brainerd) is Assistant Majority Leader.

by Sen. Howard Knutson

Professionals in the criminal justice field are not the rough and ready gangbusters they used to be. The problems facing them have become sophisticated and so have the criminal justice professionals.

One of the problems deals with commitment of individuals for treatment. Treatment, in this instance, means placing one's person under control, to a greater or lesser degree, of another person. Giving up this amount of freedom or liberty may be done "voluntarily" or under legal order.

The concept of when the legal process should interfere with freedom and liberties is continually being refined; hence, the importance of the commitment process and an understanding of "voluntary" treatment.

Once, every town had its town drunk and mental incapacity used to be an excuse for almost anything. Now we say, "people need treatment." Perhaps we should ask the basic question — does an individual have the right to pursue his own abnormalities as he sees fit. This topic could be discussed endlessly.

Let's look at Minnesota. An 1873 Health Board report recognized alcoholism as a health problem. An alcoholism treatment program was started in 1938 at Willmar State Hospital and in 1971 Minnesota was among the first states to decriminalize public intoxication.

In 1967 a comprehensive hospitalization and commitment act was passed. Care ranges from just being under the same roof with another able person to appointing a guardian, to commitment.

In Minnesota there are essentially three types of commitment.

Emergency Hospitalization: This kind of hospitalization can be accomplished upon a written statement from a physician that a person is mentally ill, inebriate or mentally deficient, is in imminent danger of causing injury to himself or others if not immediately restrained or a court ordered commitment cannot be obtained in time to prevent such anticipated injury. This section also permits a peace officer to take a person who is publicly intoxicated into custody and transport him to a licensed hospital. Persons held under this section could be held for up to 72 hours. If discharge is not deemed appropriate by the head of the hospital he shall, absent any other filing, petition for the commitment of such person.

Judicial Commitment: This means that an interested person must file a petition in probate court requesting commitment. The petition must be accompanied by a written statement by a licensed physician stating that he has examined the patient and finds the patient may be mentally ill, mentally deficient or inebriate and should be hospitalized or that the petitioner has been unable to obtain or could not obtain an examination. A copy of the petition shall be delivered to the county welfare department. The court then will appoint two examiners, one of whom must be a licensed physician. A hearing is held with the patient guaranteed his various legal rights, including counsel, timely notice, independent evaluation, a full hearing on the merits, a chance to cross examine the witness and the right to dignified care and rehabilitation. If commitment is the decision, it cannot exceed 45 days for initial treatment.

Voluntary Admission: Upon one's own request and upon consent of the head of the hospital one may be admitted for observation, care, evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment. Such a person is free to leave the hospital within 12 hours. However, if it is a public hospital a person may be held up to three days after he requests to leave. If the director of the hospital thinks the person should be detained, the director shall petition for a judicial commitment.

Sen. Howard Knutson



Suggestions for changes are as follows:

1. There should be a screening process where trained persons would screen petitions to avoid the expensive lengthy process of formal commitment procedure.
2. If the case actually goes to a formal petition, the county attorney should review the petition for completeness and due process practice.
3. Written review should be required at the end of the commitment period.
4. Miscellaneous items to consider might be a patient advocate, longer treatment period, and secure, quality aftercare.

We are recognizing early intervention is beneficial. Education for voluntary use of treatment and reminders for constant communication among professionals are essential. Solutions should be arrived at without infringement on individual freedoms and liberties.

Majority

by Sen. Winston Borden

Crime control and corrections has been a hot topic in Minnesota and nationally in recent years. We have heard how we must spend less time dealing with "victimless crime" and concentrate on the violent offender. One special type of crime which victimizes every man, woman and child every day has largely been ignored in these debates.

"White collar crime" now results in minimum losses of 40 billion dollars each year for American businesses. Those losses, nearly 20 percent of the total business income before taxes, are passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Even with a conservative loss estimate, it becomes clear that white collar crime is costing **every** man, woman and child in our country \$185 per year.

White collar crime is, in fact, becoming big business. According to a January 1977 issue of the *New York Times*, the losses to the American economy from white collar crime exceeds the combined losses from narcotics, prostitution, murder, arson, aggravated assault and rape.

Just what constitutes white collar crime? It comes in a variety of forms including: bankruptcy fraud; bribery; business kickbacks and payoffs; theft by computer; consumer fraud; deceptive practices; credit card and check fraud; embezzlement and pilferage; insurance fraud; theft of trade secrets; and the counterfeiting of products.

Despite the fact that we know white collar crime exists — and is growing — the criminal justice system is finding it extremely difficult to deal with this type of crime.

Society seems to condone white collar crime. A survey recently conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation found that nearly 50 percent of the American business executives interviewed saw nothing wrong with bribing foreign officials to retain or attract contracts.

In-house white collar crime is no easier to control, largely because businessmen show a marked reluctance to prosecute their own employees. They prefer to avoid publicity and handle the problem internally.

Once in the courts, we seem no better equipped to handle the problems. In 1976, 91 percent of the nation's convicted bank robbers received jail terms, with sentences averaging more than 11 years. That same year only 17 percent of those convicted of embezzling bank funds were sent to prisons, and for terms averaging less than 2 years.

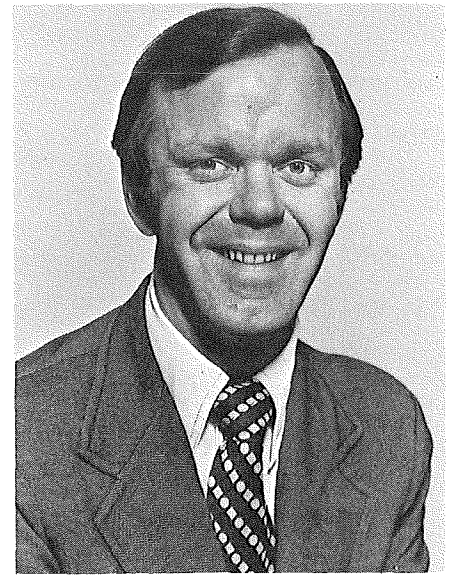
Here in Minnesota we are beginning to take a look at white collar crime and how we can best curb it. Since most white collar crime is business-related, we have chosen the more definite term, "economic crime." Regardless of the name, the problem is the same.

Economic crimes are complex, difficult to detect and prosecute. Our Attorney General's Office has a special, federally funded Economic Crime unit including an experienced prosecutor, a certified public accountant and two special investigators. That unit now works with state investigators from a variety of agencies in investigating economic crime. The unit also works closely with county attorneys, often assisting those attorneys in the prosecution of economic offenses. However, if the county attorney decides not to prosecute, the Attorney General's unit may still prosecute on its own (with the county attorney's consent).

The Economic Crime unit now faces serious financial difficulties, with federal funding due to expire next year. I want the legislature to provide for the continuation and expansion of the unit. To be effective the Economic Crime Control unit must be expanded. White collar crime robs the consumer and hurts the honest businessman. It will continue to grow unless we are willing to commit greater resources to combat it.

We must focus resources not only into investigation and prosecution effort, but also into a concentrated effort to educate business on how to deter and detect economic crime within their organizations. The educational program must include efforts to encourage the prosecution of economic crime. As we allow economic crime to be "swept under the rug," the white collar offender will feel free to take the chance that ends up costing the consumer an additional 15 percent markup on the products he buys.

Sen. Winston Borden



We must also look at our criminal code to determine where we can strengthen our laws in relation to economic crime. The current penalty system seems to treat economic crime, regardless of its impact, as a lesser offense. Consider, for example, the former chairman of the Oklahoma based Four Seasons Nursing Centers of America who, after pleading guilty in federal court to defrauding stockholders of 8 million dollars, received only a one year sentence. Generally we do not incarcerate people for economic crimes, but if fines are seen as "license fees" to conduct economic thievery, we'll have to put a few folks in jail. We must examine **our** state criminal statutes to ensure that our penalties accurately reflect the seriousness and potential impact of economic crime.

Overall, I would say our program in response to white collar or economic crime, must include a stronger, well-funded Economic Crime Control Prosecution Unit; a business education program; and stringent penalties for those found guilty of serious economic crime.

MZG to open in May

It's all happening at the Zoo



One of the beluga whales seems as interested in his visitors as they are in him. Among those looking up are Sen. Allan Spear (at right foreground).

by Karen Clark

Someone told me
It's all happening at the zoo
I do believe it
I do believe it's true.

Paul Simon

Recently members of a House Appropriation Subcommittee and a Senate Finance Subcommittee had an opportunity to find out just what was "happening at the zoo." Members of the subcommittee were taken on a guided tour of the new Minnesota Zoological Garden in Apple Valley by MZG staff members.

After a stormy legislative history, in which at times it appeared the new zoo would never be constructed, the Minnesota Zoological Garden is scheduled to open in May of this year. Legislators taking the tour had an opportunity, not only to assess the zoo's progress, but also to get a sneak preview as to what is in store for the 1.8 million visitors expected during the zoo's first year of operation.

Zoo director Don Bridgewater began by presenting a slide show describing the various stages of construction and the underlying concepts of the project. "The MZG is to be an environmental education, conservation, research center of national scope." The animals will be primarily from the Northern Hemisphere and will be displayed in settings imitating nature. Visitors will be introduced into the animal's environment. "The ideal is to communicate, to talk to people — that is the justification for a zoo," explained Bridgewater.

A tropical rainforest

Senators and Representatives then had the rather startling experience of walking through a tropical rainforest, all the while knowing that it was a typical sub-zero Minnesota winter's day outside. The MZG will have over 600 different varieties of plants, according to Bridgewater, and many of those are already in place in the rainforest area. At the time of the tour finishing touches were being given the acre and a half exhibit. Some of the most exotic animals — linsangs, flamingos, binturongs and leopards — will be housed there. There will also be large free flight aviaries through which visitors can walk while touring the multi-leveled exhibit.

Zoo staff members explained an unusual nocturnal exhibit. Since many species of animals are only active during the night

Zoo Director Donald Bridgewater gestures while explaining a feature of one of the exhibits (below). Senators Hubert H. Humphrey III and Allan Spear are at the far left and right respectively.

Below left: Bridgewater



time hours, special lighting has been designed to turn day into night so that visitors will be able to watch animals at their most active hours.

A showcase for native Minnesota animals

A special Minnesota Exhibit was still undergoing construction at the time of the tour. However, Bridgewater and his staff explained that the exhibit sequence will show Minnesota habitats ranging from prairie, lakes and streams to northern forests. More than 100 kinds of native Minnesota wildlife will be on exhibit. And, by means of a special T.V. camera, visitors will even be able to view the domestic life of beavers inside their lodge. An enclosed walkway will provide a view of larger Minnesota animals going about their natural activities during the winter months.

The Beluga whales — the star attraction

The last stop on the tour was a visit to the only animals as yet in residence at the new zoo — the Beluga whales. (Other animals have been acquired but are either in quarantine or being held at other zoos until construction is completed.) The whales are, according to one zoo staff member, "the star exhibits," and their performance gave credence to the statement. The Belugas, closely related to dolphins, are social creatures with a lively curiosity, the staff member said. The sound of people at the lowest viewing levels brought them in close to investigate, giving Senators and Representatives a chance to see the whales at close range. Other marine exhibits will show animal and plant life as it is found in polar, temperate and tropical oceans.

Several other major exhibits are also scheduled for completion by the May 1978 opening, including a Japanese Macaque or "snow monkey" exhibit, a Childrens Zoo and a Northern Trek, showing large cold weather animals in their natural surroundings. A monorail, scheduled to begin in October 1978, will follow the two mile Northern Trek all year round. Other projects on the drawing board will begin when funds are available.

MZG as a state agency

The Minnesota Zoological Garden is an agency of the state of Minnesota, with planning, construction and operation managed by an eleven member State Zoological Board. Creation of the Zoo Board as a department of state government was accomplished by the Legislature in 1969. The actual groundbreaking for the new facility was in May of 1974. Funding came about through \$23.025 million in state bonds, plus additional state bonding of up to \$2.35 million as matching funds to private contributions. The construction budget is currently \$29.25 million. Any additional construction will be funded by MZG generated revenues, grants, donations and matching funds.

The zoo is designed to be operationally self supporting through revenue. An advertising campaign is already underway to increase public interest and awareness of the new zoo. Entrance fees will be \$2.50 for adults, \$1.25 for children aged 7-16 and free for children under 7. There will also be one advertised free day per month and school groups with reservations will be admitted free. In addition, a 20 percent discount on admission will be available to groups of 25 or more.

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Ashbach, Robert O.	48	123B SOB	4111	Menning, Marion (Mike)	26	28 Cap.	4171
Bang, Otto T., Jr.	39	136 SOB	4122	Merriam, Gene	47	27 Cap.	4154
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Borden, Winston W.	13	208 Cap.	2607	Nichols, Jim	20	23A Cap.	4474
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Gearty, Edward J.	54	235 Cap.	4174	Schaaf, David D.	46	205 Cap.	4179
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Humphrey, Hubert H., III	44	121 Cap.	4180	Sieloff, Ron	63	128 SOB	4310
Jensen, Carl A.	28	121A SOB	4112	Sikorski, Gerry	51	23D Cap.	4700
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Keefe, John B.	40	124 SOB	4118	Solon, Sam George	7	303 Cap.	4188
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Lessard, Bob	3	24B Cap.	4136	Ulland, James	8	143 SOB	4314
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