

Interview with Robert Mahowald
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Interviewed by John Waldron and Calvin Gower

Gower: This is an interview for the Central Minnesota Historical Center, conducted by John Waldron and Calvin Gower on August 24th 1973. Today we're interviewing Mr. Robert Mahowald, who was a State Representative elected in 1960, 1962, and 1964, from districts 45, (then re-numbered 27) and then another re-numbering, 51A. Okay, John.

Waldron: Mr. Mahowald we start out with general questions. When you were born, where you were born, your family background, and your educational background.

Mahowald: Ok. I was born on January 16th, 1924, in Breckenridge, Minnesota. Our family moved to St. Cloud in 1930. I lived in St. John's University, one year at the University of Minnesota, and graduated from West Point, the United States Military Academy in 1947. I served for nine years in the regular army and returned to St. Cloud in 1956 to join my father in the insurance business here which he established in 1930. From that time on, I have been a permanent resident in St. Cloud.

Gower: Was anybody in your background involved in politics at any times?

Mahowald: No. I was the first one.

Waldron: Ok. Exactly what is the reason you got involved in politics?

Mahowald: Well, I was always interested in government, in my community, and I just felt that this was a way to become actively involved, I suppose at a time when this active involvement wasn't as much in vogue and it is now. I probably didn't realize how much work it was and how difficult it was until I got started, and after I found out, I realized I had a tiger by the tail, and just took it and ran.

Gower: Had you done any work in the party before you ran for office?

Mahowald: No, I was not active in the affairs of a political party before I ran for office.

Gower: Now, you ran under the conservative label, I believe, did you consider yourself a Republican?

Mahowald: By persuasion, I have been basically a Republican. I ran as a conservative, because in those days, it was conservative and liberals you had one of those two choices. I assume that there were probably some people in the legislature who ran as conservative, who may have been Democrats, and some who ran as liberals who may have been conservative. I don't know. My philosophy was pretty much middle of the road, my family background had been Republican, and I suppose that contributed as much to it as anything, so yes, I considered myself a Republican. All things being equal, I would vote for the republican candidate which means also that I didn't hesitate in any election to vote for the man who I thought was the best man, regardless of party affiliation.

Gower: Did you--Had you thought about running for any other office other than the legislature in 1960?

Mahowald: No. I had never thought of running for any office at all. I had been approached to run for the city council and several other offices. But legislature work had particular appeal to me and I never had any intention of seeking another office at another level, either higher or lower, or any type of administrative office, such as mayor or anything like that. The legislative field was my area of primary concern.

Waldron: Did your military background West Point Training have any influence on the way you think in politics?

Mahowald: No, I don't think West Point background does have that kind of influence. I think people who do not have this background probably have certain concerns because of the so-called Military Mind that that sort of thing, but as I looked back over my life, what it was, it was a solid training in academic background at West Point. The training is more academic than a lot of people realize. It's basically engineering and a lot of history and that sort of thing. I have a son who graduated from West Point in 1972, and obviously I observe him very carefully. I have another son who graduated from a private liberal arts college and is entering medical school. I see no difference in their basic philosophy that I can detect as a result of where they went to college. I think there's a certain basic interest in your country, which is stimulated up there, but no, I wouldn't say it doesn't affect my overall philosophy at all.

Gower: Did you think that your military background helped you in your political activity?

Mahowald: Yes, I think I could say as I look back over my life, that the training I received at the Military Academy and various service schools, including the Command and General staff college were good training vehicles, by a large I think they taught you how to solve problems, how to organize work, and how to accomplish a job. And if I was at all successful in the

legislature, in mainly legislation, and I think I was, the record will show that I moved a lot of relatively significant legislation, that came about for being what I would call well organized and purposeful work. So I think that this training, in that regard, is good. This training is not so much specific to actual military hardware as it is to the organizing of a task and developing the type of leadership that enables you to work with other people. And to get other people to work with and for you. That's the way I see it myself.

Gower: Also, do you think the people voted for you in part because of your West Point background?

Mahowald: I do not think so. I think you have to look at all these things in context of history. I think right after World War II there was a wave of patriotism in a certain life gratitude toward people who had served in the service. Because so many did. But when I ran in 1960 we were in a period of time when there was little thought given to military one way or the other. I don't think we had the adverse reaction to it that we had during the Vietnam situation. Nor do I think that there was any inclination to build it up. I think people general saw in my at that time I was 36 years old I was an educated man. I had in a number of organization and what not, demonstrated, I think, the ability to do work. I don't think it was a factor. I think I was recognized as a man who had been trained to do work, but I don't think the military thing was a pro or con at all. At least it was never used by me. Never used that sort of thing. I don't know if I benefitted from it at all, and I don't think that it hurt me in any respect. I would consider it complete neutralite figure.

Waldron: In the 1960 election you ran against Dewey Reed who was the incumbent and he was in the house, I believe, for six terms. How did you shape your campaign around this incumbent?

Mahowald: Well, Dewey Reed had been in the legislature for about twelve years. And I think what happens is the longer you are in the legislature, the more vulnerable you become. And I actually didn't feel that Dewey Reed was an aggressive enough legislator for this district. I knew Dewey, I'd known him for years, in fact, we lived across the street from each other. Dewey was something of an introvert by personality, and I felt that the community of St. Cloud in 1960 was just on the threshold of growth, expansion, and an entirely new ways of living. There was enough difference in our ages that Dewey Reed and I were of different generations. This is the way I saw it, I think I was at the beginning, this was the year John Kennedy ran for president; this was the first time younger men came in with this idea for getting things moving. John did it as a democrat, I did it as a conservative, but basically with the same philosophy, Dewey was, as I said, a generation before me, and the status quota was pretty much his philosophy. Dewey was not too well a man, he was not too responsive to the overall challenges of the community. And I think that what I see now would indicate that I was right in 1960. If we look back over the past thirteen years, St. Cloud has made its most dynamic growth, and its greatest change from a very provincial mid-state agricultural trade center to a very prominent medical center, a prominent educational center, a very sophisticated commercial center and I think that I saw this then and I felt that I could bring the type of representation to this district in the legislature that it needed to make these goals. And that was the reason behind it. Dewey Reed was a very honorable man, a very fine man, and I think he did a good job in the twelve years. Frankly, I have a feeling about your tenure there, I feel that you should move as fast as you can, but twelve to fourteen years probably gives the best out of any man, Then it's good to go on to a new man, new ideas, because everybody has a tendency to see it the way he went in. And I think in this type of society things change.

Waldron: Do you think this is what happened to you after six years in the legislature that you got vulnerable enough to be defeated?

Mahowald: Oh, I think, I think you do become vulnerable, you run every two years. I didn't particularly care for campaigning, it's a lot of work, there are certain people who are of the backslapping type, who are up and down the street because they like it. I think that sort of person can maintain himself in elective office almost indefinitely. My approach was to do something for the community. It's the time I was defeated I was a member of the House Rules committee at that time it was only a thirteen member committee, one of the most powerful committees in the legislature, I was a member of the Appropriations committee, on the sub-committee on Educational Appropriation, the committee that handles 65% of the state budget. I chaired the sub-committee in Semi-State activities. I was on the Education Committee, I was involved in the five main conference committee that established the Junior College system for the state of Minnesota. I was involved in a great deal of state-wide legislation and while I—in those days we had no staff—it was a question of doing the work yourself and I was very heavily involved in doing this work and doing very little campaigning. My opponent in that election, Jack Kleinbaum, was a very popular individual up and down the street. He had a great deal of popular appeal. He had just lost a mayor election, to Ed Heney by 47 votes, just before he ran against me, I think Jack benefitted from a certain sympathy wave, people liked Jack. I heard people say, "I didn't think he was going to win, but I didn't want him to lose badly." I think that there were a lot of things involved at the time, To answer your question, yes, you become vulnerable unless you are real active as a politician, I was not an active politician, I was not active in party, I was not active at the legion home, I wasn't over at the VFW, I didn't go to all of the church suppers, while Jack on the other hand, had just run a campaign for mayor, a more vigorous campaign for

mayor than I had previously for the legislature, and he kept right on running till this election. And I think that pretty well sums it up.

Gower: On the matter of changing people, you know, getting, replacing, them in legislature after twelve years or something, now you were mentioning there that in 1966 you were on a number of very important committees. Now isn't there some value in keeping a person in there because he can get in after some years have passed.

Mahowald: I think there's no question about it, when I was defeated in 1966, this community lost a great deal of representation in the legislature because I was a member of the majority group, at that time. I had very key committee assignments in addition to being on the committees, which I mentioned before, it was a quilt-edge list of committee rules which really established the tone, and you could get anything moved by sitting on rules. I sat on education, which is important to our district. I was instrumental in changing the state aid formula which brought considerably more money to the St. Cloud school district. I did a great deal for the St. Cloud State College during the years I was down here. My big chance in the legislature came in my second term. I went into a situation whereas a conservative I was in the minority in my first term, in the second term the conservatives gained control and in the conservative group there was a very tight fight within the group, to see who was going to be a speaker. I happened to line up with Lloyd L. Ducksberry and was very aggressive in lining up people to vote him for speaker. He won by one vote. Politicians don't forget these things, and when the dust settled, he said "Bob, what committees do you want?" And I told him I wanted Education, and appropriations and a few others, and he said, "Well, don't you want rules?" And I said yes, but I don't think my seniority will give it to me. He said, "You've got it." He said is there anything else you'd like? I said sometime I would like you to break up the educational thing and put higher education in a

separate committee, and leave the primary and secondary in the so-called Education Committee. He said I'll do it this time. So I chaired the first Higher Education Committee that the legislature has had, and in the regard, I processed all the legislation for the state colleges, the Junior Colleges that were in existence at that time, and subsequently, though that we established a state wide Junior College system and I think I was able to do a lot for St, Cloud State College, sitting on appropriations and chairing the Higher Education Committee. I was able to do things for the college that I couldn't have done otherwise, and then I was defeated, of course, Mr. Kleinbaum went in as a minority representative. He did not have the—through no fault in his own, regardless of who it had been—he just didn't have the power in the legislature to represent his community that way. And in that regard, I suppose my departure was premature. I said I think twelve years is a good time, I think, in my case, ten years probably would have been about right. I don't know. The demand in time was becoming excessive, you see, when I was elected to the legislature and during the entire time we served, we made \$200.00 a month, and we made \$15.00 a day expenses. And we made nothing when we went to Enterim Meetings. Right now, the legislator makes \$700 a month, he gets \$35 a day for expenses, and \$50 every time he goes to a meeting. So they have more than quadrupled. Also there are pension plan now, which is very lush according to private standards of which I did not participate, and which my successor and everybody who had gone in that year has become a part. So the compensation for the legislator is far greater than it was, and the way things were going it had gotten to the point that it was costing us money in our business for me to be there, because of the work I did. Had I taken out a lower committee assignment and been more active in politics, you see you can perpetuate yourself in office, by being non-controversial, and by being around. If you go down and do your work, and if I were to give Mr. Reed any criticism, he did about the same thing, he was not a

backslapper, he was not around campaigning during the legislature, he was down there actively doing his job. And also, he did it under adverse circumstances, because he was not a well man. So these are the things, but I think I've rambled--. To answer your questions, I think my defeat was not good for the community at the time, because they could have gotten stronger representation for the next two years or for years, because of the position I held. And then of course, this last time, the tables turned and the liberals had gained control of the house, but Mr. Kleinbaum shifted to the other body and became a freshman again. So this district has since 1960, reduced its effectiveness in the legislature by almost a too rapid turnover. Mr. Kleinbaum would have had some seniority in the house, but he went over to senate and has no seniority even though he's in the majority group, the two representatives in the house are freshman, from my observations, both very competent men. But they are still backrow freshmen, so this district now should be in the position where it would want to be consolidating its position and developing some seniority because this very rapid turnover is as bad as leaving people in who become stagnant.

Gower: Can I just follow up one or two items there? Did you think it good to raise the salaries and the expense money and so on of the legislators?

Mahowald: Well I think that the compensation was very inadequate when I was there. I think it has jumped very rapidly. Many things, if people would look at the thing carefully, you'd find that the cost of operating the legislature today might be as much as ten times as high as it was in 1961. I think the point has come about now where spending on these items is slightly out of control, and slightly out of perspective. They needed a raise in pay, I seriously question the idea of a pension from legislative service. I think that you must look at legislators a little different from Civil Service people and the professional engineer, professional educators that service the

state, professional health people, I think the legislature has no right to expect a pension from his legislative service. The legislature is a part time business, the legislature is a little inconsistent when it says I'm a part time man, but I want a pension. Part-time people don't get pensions in our society. And I think the pension thing was out of line, I would not be for it. I think the pay scale is out of line. I would say this, there are legislators down there who do not earn the money they are making today. There are other legislators who are woefully underpaid. You cannot pay legislators based on what they do, the work they do and that sort of thing. You find this in a lot of large organizations. You have to have a standard of pay, which means some people are going to be underpaid, and some people are going to be overpaid. You find it in education, a man with a certain degree teaching in a certain department with so many years of experience draws a certain pay – and another man with the same background and credentials will draw the same, one man may do almost twice as much and be twice as effective as the other. These things we can't rectify so I think the pay basically on the average is about right.

Gower: When you were in legislature, you were still doing the same work in your insurance office. But also did you, the fact that you were in partnership with your father, I guess that was the arrangement. Did this aid you in being able to stay in there from a financial standpoint?

Mahowald: You see, as I said, the most I ever drew in legislature was \$200 a month. I raised five children and you don't raise them on \$200 a month. No, we actually, it cost me money and the \$15 a day expenses, it was impossible to stay down there and come back and forth and spend so much time. In the insurance business your time is your money, my father was very active in the business in those days and, yes, it was a strain, but the legislature sessions weren't quite as long. When I entered it was a ninety day session, my second term it went up to 120 days and we quit in 118 days, it wasn't this prolonged, dragging out continuation type of a thing that

has happened since then. And under the present conditions it would be totally impossible for me to go into the legislature or to serve in the legislature because the time away from our business would be prohibitive and the business would die. And even with the increased compensation, I think we're reaching a very critical point in legislative work right now. It has become a bit more than the part time job that it used to be. The idea of the founding fathers was that people would drop their plow and drop their pan and go down to St. Paul and work for initially thirty days then sixty days every two years and then ultimately ninety days. You would take care of the affairs of the basic laws of the state in that time and you would draw from the farmers and the merchants and the professional people, and the educators, you would have a representative cross-section of people opening down to do these things. The situation that now exists in the legislature is one where a basic decision has to be made is the legislature to come up from the grass roots of the community from all walks of life and be a part time situation where people take leaves of absence from their jobs. Or is it going to become a full time situation where people (very much like the Congress of The United States) where a legislator is a full time government employee working at the states business full time. I think we're right at the critical point right now, with annual sessions and extended work between sessions I think whether you work for yourself or whether you work for someone else, it is going to be absolutely impossible to continue this pace on a part time basis. So either the legislature work will have to be cut back and put on a reasonable part time basis, or we'll have to face up to the fact that it is full time work and there will have to be full time compensation. If its full time compensation and full time work, then there's no question about the fact that the legislature must be reduced in size, because the idea of grass root representation leaves the scene as you become a full time legislator, you are no longer a farmer or a lawyer or a full time druggist, or a veterinarian, or a retail store owner, or an

educator – you are a legislator. And with full time and with very very adequate staffs that are being provided right now you should be able to represent a much larger geographic and population sector of the community than you could in the past.

Gower: I just have one other thing along that line. You said you didn't have any staff back when you were a legislature. Would you explain that please?

Mahowald: When I say staff I'm talking about just the Administrative and research backup that people have, let me must show you what the situation was in 1961. If you were in the minority, regardless of your seniority, the only place you had to work was your desk in the chamber of the House of Representatives. Your stenographic backup came from the pool of the stenographers that was hired by the majority. They came from a pool and sometimes they were available and sometimes they were not. Your filing cabinet was your desk drawer, you had not telephone other than to go out and use the public phones in the hall. And so in this regard I would say there was little staff. A committee chairman, in other words, a senior person in the majority group, shared an office with at least one other, and more often two other representatives, there was one telephone and one committee secretary who had to take care of the committee notes for each of the three committees, the committee meetings, publishing the notices, and doing the correspondence for those people, because if you were in that group, then you could not draw from the pool. So I would say that the staff was almost totally non-existent at that time.

Now let's look at the situation, every legislator, be he the newest freshman in the minority group, comes in, has a private desk, a private telephone a three drawer locked filing cabinet. His group, majority of minority, has very broad spending authority in the hiring of a stenographic pool. There are more than adequate stenographers, you can sit there and dictate letters all day long

without difficulty. There is a lot of research money being spend, senior law school students, newly graduates, from the law school. Newly graduated college people, a lot of bright young people are being brought in by the conservatives and liberals to do research and legislative work. So there is a very adequate staff. Now, if the legislator wants to pursue actively any field, be it education, highways, welfare, whatever it is, he has all the administrative and research backup and some great talented young people to get his job done. This was not available in the past.

Waldron: Going back to what you're saying about the committees, and obviously, just looking at your committees assignments for '61 and committee assignments for 63', you see a big difference and you said in 1961 the liberals had control of the house, did this in any way influence the committees you had in '61?

Mahowald: The committee I had in '61 were dictated by Mr. Reed, because Mr. Reed was very bitter when he was defeated. And he asked Don Waziniak to put me, to give me more of the committees than I wanted. And he asked to have my put on several committees which would have controversial legislation. He asked to have my put on I think it was called The Election Party in those days, because the party designation would come up, and this was supposed to be a no called hot potato for me. This was not hot potato for me, I voted for party designation. But Dewey Reed thought this was going to be a real tough one for me to swallow. And it was kind of interesting at the time, the leadership in the legislature, the liberal leadership did not want party designation. I was asked by the leader not to be present when it came up. I said, "Baloney, I am gonna vote for the thing." It just bothered me. Well, he said, "there's not going to be a quorum so don't bother showing up." I said, "Well, that's alright, I'll come anyway." So there are the things. Then I was put in an embarrassing position because at that time the MD's and the chiropractors had a long running fight about increased licensures for the practice of chiropractic

medicine. And because this is a strong medical center, and because at that time there were a number of quite prominent chiropractors in town, this was supposed to put me in a very difficult position. I found it very difficult. So my committee assignment were dictated by that sort of thing. It's the sort of thing that I wouldn't dream of doing. I wouldn't dream of going to Lloyd Duckberry and saying look, I feel bad that Mr. Kleinbaum defeated me, don't put him in education, don't put him here, don't put him there, I said put him where you think he can do the job." To me this is a smallness that shouldn't go on. It doesn't go on too often, but it does happen. But it didn't make much difference what committees I was on in '61, we were in the minority but in 1962 or rather 1963 and 1965 I suppose no one in the in the legislature had more powerful committee assignments than I did. So it all works out and I feel no bitterness toward the thing. I think it's inconsistent to believe in your community, and then try to cripple your successor by way of committee assignments. I think it's very inconsistent because we were not down there for a personal thing, because you'd have to be almost ready for commitment to an asylum if you're going down there for something personal. Especially in those days, when Dewey and I were down there, \$200 a month. You really have to believe that you're down there to do something for your community. Then may be in a state wide way. Of course, Dewey's immediate intention was to run for err, to return to the legislature, which he did and my record was very closely watched down there. There were two people watching me all during the '61 session. They built a file and they built a case and Dewey did make the run and he was defeated, I think by a very sizable margin in 1962. So this is politics though, and politics will always have some of this element in it. This is the nature if the game.

Gower: This was interesting when you were talking about the committee assignments, because we've talked to about eighteen legislators, an ex-legislator and as I recall almost all of them said

that they usually had received the committee assignments which they had asked for. You know, as close as possible anyway – they couldn't get them all- so this was quite different to what the thing that you were describing there. We were talking earlier about where it might be a good idea to change legislators after ten or twelve years. Now we have had some legislators in there for a long time, thirty years and son on. Would you want to discuss this general situation of the type of legislators we might have in the future and so on?

Mahowald: Well I think if we go to the full time legislator, then you're going to have a man who constantly campaigns because it's a question of income dependence. Job survival. That sort of thing. So if a guy can keep himself popular before his people constantly his income goes on, and if he does not his income terminates. Two months following his defeat in the November election, and the man is then faced with going out and finding a job. The one thing that I see here, you see my defeat in the legislature was good for me and good for my family economically from the time of decrease in time and all of these things. I'm not too sure my wife didn't even vote against me just to get me back home to work with the kids and that sort of thing. I wouldn't blame her if she did. If I were full time, let's just say that at this time our business had been wiped out, this would have been a catastrophe for us if I'd been left with the legislature. Losing the legislature was financially good for us. But with a full time legislator, if he loses his seat in the legislature, he lost his income, he's lost his hospitalization, he's lost all the things that we have in our primary walk of life. So my guess is, human beings being that we are, a legislator will focus very definitely on maintaining his position. Sometimes this prostitutes your philosophy and your principles because bread in the mouths of your children can be more important than taking the stand that you believe in legislative matters. I think the quality of legislation will reduce in the full time legislature atmosphere. You will not have the really bright

people coming in on a part time basis doing it because they believe in something and not for economic gain. I don't think you're going to have Don Sinclair who Don Sinclair was there for a number of years. He was most distinguished senator. Senator Rosenmeier- a controversial man, but keenly brilliant. He sponsored and developed much imaginative legislation of a very complex and complicated form. The sort of thing that he probably would charge \$40,000 legal fee, he did and he did beautifully. Over on the house side Don Woznick a very bright St. Paul lawyer, a man who had to lose money by being in the legislature. Fred Cheena, from the Iron Range, one of the most brilliant and effective men to have served in the legislature, I suppose, and Don Wazinick, Gordon Rosenmeier and Llyod Duckberry down there on a full time basis. So in the past I think we have had some very brilliant people and some very effective people and then in the back row we had some very mediocre people. I don't say this degradingly, these were people who were very honest and ethical, but short of imagination and they followed people who they saw as leaders. Now we have compressed it in the middle. We don't have the really bright, imaginative people, and we don't have the really mediocre people. We have middle type of kind of lukewarm sort of guy. He's gonna watch his P's and Q's. He's not gonna step out too much but he will be an educated and competent administrator of the public's business. But this isn't an administrative job, legislators must provide the natural resources programs. The long range programs that pertain Riparian Rights and the ecology of the state. The long range coordination of education-- especially higher education in the state. This must come from people who are highly imaginative and highly gifted and who have proved that they can do make it day by day in the outside world. And in this regard I think we're going to lose something under the new system.

Waldron: Getting into a general question, what are some major legislature and bills that you authored that you thought of that were of some importance?

Mahowald: Well I think some of them you see its been better than six years since I've been in the legislature and I've forgotten some of it. But I think one of the significant things, and it had to do with people in the state of Minnesota, we had a rather archaic approach to juvenile driving. We licensed fifteen year olds at will, at the time I entered the legislature, and this was poor. I drew up a bill and had it passed which is still on the books today without modification which raised the driving age fifteen to sixteen and required a full driving training course certificate to get your license at sixteen. And if you didn't take such course, you couldn't get your license until you were eighteen years of age. I think this was really significant because again you see, recognizing the great influence of automobiles that were just starting to hit the scene. In 1950 there weren't anywhere near the automobiles on the road in St. Cloud or the State of Minnesota highways that there were in 1960. This was probably something I saw more clearly than did Mr. Reed for example. And this bill was not passed without controversy. There were a lot of financial interests involved here. Used car salesmen, used car dealers, the automobile industry. Many people fought it. They fought it subtly, but they fought it. And I was pleased to have passed this bill. I think the establishment of the state Junior College system was an accomplishment. There were many bills to do this sort of thing in the legislature, and nobody could agree at how to do it, or what to do. And in the conference committee on the major Education Appropriation Bill in the 1963 session, I think Senator Dunlap and myself did most of the work and we put the thing together and we took the idea that people were working with, and put it in as a rider to the Appropriations Bill and established what has become I think, a model of Junior College and Community Colleges in the United States. There are now eighteen Junior Colleges separating under a central system and they are really a model system in the United States. This was very significant legislation, and as I say, I at the time, I suppose I could have told you, I passed many,

many bills that were of statewide significance and of course a great many of local significance. Right now I can't recall them and I think this probably points up something that we should all take. At the time I passed these bills, and in some cases there were close votes, they looked like life or death. Well now they don't look that important. I think we could take today's actions and put them in perspective. There was an old man down there when I came into legislature. And I was concerned about the particular bill one time, and he said, "Young man, don't worry so much about it, you never eat it as hot as it comes out of the oven." And I've never forgotten about that. And I think there's something to that. You get very concerned about the so-called crisis of the day. But the crisis of the day, doesn't really last very long, these things have a way of working out and modifying with time. And maybe this is one of the strengths of our system.

Waldron: Very good. What do you think of the new Legislatures opening committees in conference? Conference Committees?

Mahowald: I think it's strictly semantics. Conference committees are negotiating sessions. And I don't think that labor and Management can open up their negotiating sessions to the general public. Because I think that they would ever negotiate anything. Conference Committees in legislature are open now to the public. But these gentlemen have to eat, they have to eat with someone, they have to talk, I just don't believe, unless you were to keep each other of the legislators in isolation, during the period of the conference, away from the telephone and away from other people, would you ever get this so called quote "openness". They do their final work in open session with the public, but if you would watch one you would see how things go. It's almost on cue to the matters that are made. And I don't blame them for this. This, and there's nothing wrong in trying to negotiate and compromises these items that they couldn't arrive at in open body before. Because what they ultimately do, is before the public, sometimes you can't

just sit then and negotiate properly. So I don't think it has really changed much. If you were to say to the open advocate of open meetings, "Say now, were going to put you in total isolation, everything must be here almost like a jury panel." I think they'd have to say, "Now, let's not carry this too far, let's go back and be reasonable about it." It just doesn't work. I do think the public business should be open, but again I don't think that contract negotiations can ever be before the general public. Some things just have to be done by representatives of various factions. I have to believe that the democrats representing one philosophy of thought, the republicans representing another philosophy. These are honorable men down there and I don't think that I ever saw a legislator ever do a dishonest thing in the time I was in the legislature. I just have to believe that these are honorable men representing both philosophies, that they will do the honorable thing. Sometimes a guy might call a guy a name that he wouldn't want to call him in public. Sometimes this has to be done. In the heat of negotiation maybe, I don't know that this is any great advantage. If people who really understand the system look at it carefully, I don't think this will be seen as the system look at it carefully, I don't know this will be seen as a great. As it stand now, I don't think there's any change.

Gower: Now it would be especially harmful either though, would that be your conclusion?

Mahowald: I think the changes that were made really were no changes. I think there had been an attempt well to have like the Appropriations allegations made in public. This is alright, I don't see anything wrong with this. I sat in the appropriations committee for four years and you do sit there and you allege in the big books, so to speak, for every agency of state government and it wouldn't have bothered me. I didn't care who was sitting there when we did it. I would have said what I said, and I would have alleged what I alleged. And I would have pleaded the causes that I believe in, and I don't see anything wrong with that at all. I think Conference Committees

where you're trying to negotiate differences between the House and Senate. I think sometimes there has to be some trading in there, that won't make sense to the general public. I don't think there's anything wrong with it, I think it just had to be done, and you have to exert certain pressures. Sometimes the House exerts certain pressures on the Senate. The Senate is elected for four years and feels very immune to certain public pressures. And I think the House exerts certain pressure on them. And I think probably in the best interest to the public. But I've never seen anything, I've sat on many, many conference committees, and I felt that everything was very much above boards, sometimes people got very angry with each other, and that sort of things, but it was always resolved in a proper way, because both sides were strongly represented. You must realize that the leadership in the Senate sends over their best and toughest bargainers. And the leadership in the House does exactly the same things. So I always felt that everybody's rights were pretty well looked after, and if you look at compromises coming out of conference committees they make pretty good sense by and large.

Waldron: When you served for your six years in the state House did you find that the politics there were working out of legislation, was on a non-partisan basis, and if this is true, do you see party designation hurting that function at all?

Mahowald: I would say this, that 98% of the legislation that came out of the Minnesota legislature is not decided on Democrat or Republican lines. It might be decided on rural or city lines, it might be a collection of hard core city and rural against suburban interests. It might be a philosophical difference on one point of another. The abortion thing, for example, very few times are lines up as Democrats feel one way, Republicans feel another. It's very simple to take 98% of your legislation, and the people represent their district, their community, the philosophy of their district, the cultural backgrounds and that sort of thing. I don't think that it makes much

difference. I felt in the group that I was affiliated with, the conservative group, there's a very strong feeling, we call ourselves Independence, there's a very strong feeling that your first allegiance was with your district and that you owed nothing except the vote for speaker to the group. When we organized the first vote of the session, it's the vote for the speaker, and once you vote for the speaker and he's your man, he's your choice and he organized the house, beyond that you don't owe your group any vote on anything. Whether it's taxes, education, or anything. You are absolutely free to vote the best interest of your district and that the basis on which I would want to be down there. I don't think it's always that way, I think some people are somewhat constrained. They vote what they call the caucus position. I don't particularly like that because I think it's different to have a caucus position that will just fit all the legislative districts. What might be very good for southeastern Minnesota, might be very bad for St. Cloud. And if my caucus happened to be in general in favor of it, I would hate to have to vote because I was a member of a caucus and not vote in the best interest of my district.

Gower: Well do you think party designation will make this more difficult then?

Mahowald: I think it will have a tendency to polarize legislators a little more. The polarization was not too strong when I was in the legislature, and I said, most of the legislation did not hinge around Democratic and Republican views, because well, I mean take highway legislation. Many, many things just don't. But I think professional politicians will tend to be more active in the legislature, probably more people will use the legislature as a stepping stone to higher offices, Congressional seats, constitutional offices and state government. That sort of thing. I think that the legislature to a great extent isn't too much different from a city council. I don't mean to underplay it, but I think the nature of the work is quite similar. You can look on for the education and the proper policing and the conservation of your natural resources, and the general

housekeeping of your state. We don't gain money, that sort of thing. There are a great many things that distinguish state government from federal government. There are a lot of similarities between local government and state government. And I think in this regard it should be less polarized as far as philosophy, we should develop as few antagonisms as possible, and we should approach it very much like a good city council does. How can we best develop the state of Minnesota? How can we best educate these kids? How can we best put a responsible floor under people so that they don't drop to a point of degradation as far as the welfare situation is concerned? We should have a good highway system, we should have a long range natural resources program. These things aren't political. These things are basically good management for our community. In this case, the large community being the state of Minnesota.

Gower: Did you think that you ran your campaigns of '62, '64, '66 any differently than the original one of 1960?

Mahowald: Yes, '62, and '64 and '66 had to be different because you run as an incumbent and there you have to run on your record, and you in '60, you told people what you're going to do, what you think should be done, what you would do differently than what had been done before. Then in 1962, '64 and '66 you have no choice but to stand on your record as to what you are in the legislature. By then your vote is recorded properly 12 or 1300 times in each legislative session. So you can say anything you want, but a shrewd constituent is going to regard your record more than what you say. I say a shrewd constituent, I don't know how many shrewd constituents there are. I think that if people actually looked at my record in the '63 and '65 sessions, would have reelected me out of self-interest. But that isn't politics, and I don't blame people, I think it's an elective office and you've got to play the game all the way. If you want to be re-elected, I don't think you can just stand there and say, "Look, I've got key committee

assignments, I've brought a lot of money to the school district, I've done a lot for state colleges, I've done a lot for the city of St. Cloud, I'm in a powerful position down there to represent your interest in the future. No, I think certain people like a little more than that. They like the guy down there shaking his hand, and being at all the meetings and that sort of things. And that's our system, you still have to sell yourself. And if he isn't going to buy a record, then you got to sell him something else.

Gower: Do you think it would be better to have longer terms for the House of Representatives so you wouldn't have to campaign every two years?

Mahowald: Oh, I don't know, I think that the present system of four years for the State Senate and two years for the State House of Representatives is not too bad, the districts are not unreasonably large, I would have nothing against a four-year term. I don't think there's anything so drastic in four years that the United States Congress is in a ridiculous position of running every two years. I think they should run for a four year term. But as far as the legislature is concerned I think before we make a decision to as whether we lengthen the term or not, were going to have to make the decision is this a full time legislature, or is this a part time legislature? Then I think the various pieces will fall into line as to how the term of office would be appropriate.

Gower: Did you, you've already referred to this before, but I'd like to ask this question, and so I think I will just go ahead with it anyway. Do you feel that there is a feeling of goodwill among the legislators, generally you know, respect for the fellow legislators and so on?

Mahowald: I think this varies with various points of time. Legislators who work together on a committee like appropriations do respect each other. These are people who work long, long, hard

hours, and I had just as much respect for the people who were of different political persuasion. Now there's a case where political persuasion has very little to do with it. People who had served on the appropriations committee were just hard working people who tried to take the dollars that were available and get the best possible use out of them, for welfare, highways, education, you name it, every agency of state government. There is respect there. Legislators respect legislators who work hard and are not publicity seekers and that sort of thing. The publicity seeker, the guy who's always calling a press conference for something, attacking some state figure or doing something like that, pretty soon, loses the respect of his followers. I think the man who gives long winded speeches to repeat what four other people have said, before him in the House of Representatives. This is the sort of thing that is resented. If a guy sets up and said something that really adds something than his stature really goes up. By being quiet when there's nothing to say does not cost a man anything. So I think a man has to earn respect in the Legislature, if that was basically the question. I think in general, there's feeling of good fellowship. I think out of session if you would bump into an adversary in the legislature down on the mall in Minneapolis, the two of you would have a very animated conversation, walk into a restaurant and have a cup of coffee and act just like you were in the same caucus, probably. There's a feeling of comradeship that comes about from long hours of hard work.

Gower: Is it partly too, I mean, you know, you are members of this body and it's a, given though the Minnesota legislature is rather large, it's a fairly select group, really when you think about it, out of the millions of people in Minnesota. Do you think that's part of it too?

Mahowald: Oh, sure. You have common ground. First of all, each member down there has done something unique. He had persuaded the people of his district to send him to the state capital. And I think you have to have respect for the office, respect for a man who can earn election to

the office. So each man has done that. He is the man that each district sends down. And just having done that you respect what a man has come down to do. And as you say there are a lot of very fine people in that legislature, very dedicated people, and people who have gone on to very high position. I remember when I served with Wendi Anderson in the state of Representatives, and I was in the House, Wendi had moved over to the senate. We worked rather closely together, I had respect for him then, I have respect for him now, it doesn't really surprise me if the man becomes governor. This is good apprenticeship for higher office. Al Que was a good legislator, he became a Congressman. John Schech, a very active and effective legislator became a congressman. You see this all the way through. And I think that you're going to find people who are going to be serious candidates for the governor's office and the various congressional seats. These very often have apprenticeship-so to speak-in the legislature. This is important work.

Gower: What was it about being in the legislature that you enjoyed most?

Mahowald: Oh, I think the association with people, as I mentioned before, it was good. And also if you are interested in government, and you're inquisitive about government, it's a, you're right in these, it's always nicer to drive than to ride, and that's where you are. You're involved with the making of the laws of the state. You can from some policies that you believe strongly in. And it's very satisfying to finally see a piece of legislation that you've researched and worked on and steered through your body and then getting through the Senates in the other case and getting it down when that thing is finally signed into law by the governor. You feel that you've accomplished something. I think that the only way a legislator can feel real satisfaction is by accomplishment, if he has done something that he knows are good for his community, for people in general, or for the state. This is the only real lasting compensation that you get. And this is the way that I feel about it. I have no regrets for having served, I felt that what I did was important at

the time. It was very satisfying and gratifying financially under the conditions that I explained before, it was very, very bad, it was too low, but there's still the satisfaction, if they'd payed another \$100 a month or so, it wouldn't have made that much difference. You'd forget that, that money would be gone too, but you would rather have the satisfaction of doing a job rather than the disappointment for not having done a job.

Gower: Just one last question, do you have any plans for running for any office again?

Mahowald: No plans, I think that the time that I served down there probably satisfied my desire to participate in government. I have a strong feeling that I don't say that the time would never come, I could see where in a few years if I felt strongly about the situation, I still feel strongly about this community. If I felt we were inadequately represented, and I could make a sizable contribution, I might go back into it again, but I certainly have no plans right now.

Gower: This concludes this interview.