

**David Beauchamp**  
Narrator

**Richard Haase [sp?]**  
Interviewer

**January 18, 1875**  
**Heritage Education Commission Oral History Project**  
**Moorhead, Minnesota**

**RH:** This is Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, and this is Richard Haase and I'm interviewing State Representative of District 9A, Dave Beauchamp. Is that your...for pronunciation?

**DB:** Pretty good. 1975.

**RH:** 1975, right. And I guess we can start as we do with most of these interviews with just some biographical background. And then we'll go at it from there.

**DB:** Okay.

**RH:** So you can start your monologue, I guess. [Chuckles]

**DB:** Monologue of ah...I was born in Langdon, North Dakota in 1940 of rural farm parents. Both parents died early in life, and I lived with a single aunt during the academic year and with a married uncle and aunt during the summer months in their home farm, on their home farmstead. I graduated from St. Alphonsus Elementary and Secondary School in Langdon, went on to St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota for a bachelor's degree in biology and a number of credits in general liberal arts subjects. Toured Europe as a...oh, slummer, I guess...

**RH:** [Chuckles]

**DB:** ...in summer of 1962 with a friend, a colleague of mine. And returned from Europe in the fall to work in Moorhead for part time employment waiting for a Peace Corps assignment. I was...worked at St. Ansgar's Hospital as a psychiatric orderly while waiting for Sargent Shriver, then director of the US Peace Corps, for assignment. Took fourteen months training...fourteen weeks training in Hawaii in Thai language and spent...consequently spent two years in Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer in community development. Came back to the United States and picked up a master's degree in counseling and guidance at the University of North Dakota while working in the Red River Valley through some OEO programs, Office of Economic Opportunity, and Catholic Social Service programs. And joined Moorhead State College as a faculty member and coordinator of grants, most of which had to do with low income minority people. And a program of criminal justice, which was an experimental program attempting to train and expose

the problems of the county judges, probation officers, and local law enforcement units; trying to have those units talk to each other...so that a more humanistic approach could be utilized in the seven county areas of that program.

Let's see. Then I went...I was married to a gal from Indonesia and we spent the summer of 1971 in Indonesia visiting her family. I came back through Guam, where I spent a few weeks as a consultant in elementary education. In the summer of 1972 I went to the US Office of Education in the Division of Special Student Services to work as an inter-personnel exchangee for a year. Then returning to Moorhead State as a financial aid officer, whereupon I decided to run for State Representative. The reason I chose to run is probably more a reaction to Watergate than anything else. I had been working with governments, Peace Corps experience was with the government officials in Thailand. The federal grants, of course, were direct involvement with various local state and federal government units. And then the year in Washington helped me to visualize some of the problems with government and made me more acquainted with it.

So when some local people asked me if I was interested, I laughed and said that there were other things to do. But upon being asked again, I thought about it, and decided that I would have enough experience and competence to maybe get something done. So I...I believe on June 21<sup>st</sup> announced that I would be a candidate and went before the county DFL party and sought endorsement, which I promptly received. And I began my first campaign activity on the Fourth of July at a celebration at Moorhead State College. From that time forward, I organized with the help of the state DFL office the county people and the state in the party and some local friends. And we gathered together a body of experience.

[Brief interruption – static, background noise, child voice noise]

**RH:** You've had [unclear] too, though, in the primary.

**DB:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RH:** Was that [unclear – sounds like an evolved out] endorsement? Elements or...?

**DB:** Well, after I announced...it ah...about three or four days later I was told...At the time I announced, I was told that there would be no other candidates running, at least from the DFL party, that would have a possible endorsement and that seemed to be what one would consider a worthy candidate, either Democrat or Independent. And so I ran on the assumption that there would...it would not be challenged for the primary.

Right after announcing, I soon found that a local candidate who had run before was interested, and he announced, and there was a primary. His experience in government was less than mine, and his ability to put together a campaign was, I suppose, limited because of our lack of availability of state people who had a little better picture of what was going on. And it seemed to me that most of his effort was spent in the business district of Moorhead with some door knocking and some extensive phone calling. We had two open forums, both of which...or three of which were initiated by my primary opponent. The first was just kind of an acquaintance

presentation. And it seemed to me that my candidate, my opponent would not be that formidable of a candidate. And so I decided to put most of my effort into working towards the general election.

It became apparent that my primary opponent was going to have more time available. He was not going to be working; he took a leave of absence from his employment, where I needed to keep my employment so I could maintain a salary for myself and the family. And his freedom increased the volume of people that he was able to reach. The week before the primary, it was obvious that he had gathered some financial support or else was putting a lot of money into it himself, and a mass usage of publications and some press or some electronic media was utilized. And it frightened some of the...some of my campaign people thinking that this last spurge of his would definitely be an advantage and would reduce the response to me, a dark horse.

One thing that went wrong, my opponent called an electronic media press conference at Moorhead State College the day the college opened. And the first two days, of course, are primarily freshman registration, orientation, and exposure; freshman orientation, freshman exposure to the campus, whereas the last two days, the upperclassmen came. Well, it happened that the day that this open forum was scheduled was primarily the day that freshmen were coming. There had been a little heat generated in the campaign, and a person who was working on my campaign challenged my opponent. And my opponent refused her the opportunity to ask additional questions. When that occurred, the member of my campaign came before the primary opponent, and the camera, the television camera saw my opponent telling her not...that she could not ask those questions in this open forum. Well, the contradiction of being refused an opportunity to speak in an open forum, I think, did severe damage to his candidacy. And I was told by a few people in the door knocking after that that they absolutely could not vote for a candidate who would not provide openness. This was definitely a mistake on his part.

I won the primary, and I received a congratulatory telephone call and note from the primary candidate, and he no longer participated in any of the process towards the November election. I then went on to continue door knocking and worked from North Moorhead towards South Moorhead. As a result of some targeting that we had done from previous voting patterns, studying previous voting patterns. And was now beginning to look at what potential issues the Republican candidate would bring forward in the final challenge for the general election.

My opponent, Republican opponent in the general election, had some health problems. And he was in one of the local hospitals for, I believe, intestinal problems. Surgery was performed; there were some complications in surgery. And rumor had it that there was a possibility of prolonged weakness and so on. The convalescent period probably ended at the end of...oh, mid-September, the end of September, and my opponent made his first formal statements in early October, probably October 1, stating that he was fully a candidate for the general election. And well, he had not denied that prior to that. And it was expected that he would be the candidate. He was an incumbent and had the advantage of that. And he had been a member of the Chamber of Commerce, had been in City Council, and had been a coach at Moorhead State College, all of which certainly gave an opportunity for his name to be known in the community, plus having

had part time employment as a real estate person, and I believe a part ownership in a sporting goods store.

So my naïveté of not knowing too much about my opponent nor the political process kind of scared me. And the best advice, which I still hold, that was given to us early in the game from Bob Bergland's staff, from the State office staff, and from some of the textbooks that I borrowed from both Moorhead and Fargo libraries: get to meet the people face to face. And so I'd put as a primary effort door knocking and hand shaking. The theory was that thirty seconds to...thirty to ninety seconds was appropriate. If a candidate puts more than ninety seconds into an effort, the probability of not answering the questions asked correctly is high, and so you may defeat the advantage of having that personal contact. It was a gut reaction with me seeing that one would only spend that amount of time with a potential voter. But considering the numbers of people that you needed to contact, and the amount of time that was available to me, I soon realized that that's what I was going to have to do.

I would have preferred to spend a little more time with informal social gatherings where you could talk a little bit about issues. But viewing myself, I was not that much of a politician, and not that aware of the issues currently before the group, and felt that my best advantage was to go to the person-to-person door knocking venture, and that I would have time to study the issues after the election. It would be no problem becoming acquainted with issues then. I felt that that's the way it would go. So.

**RH:** The fact that this was a first election, first State Legislature in a very long time that there was partisan labeling, did you find that to be helpful to you?

**DB:** Oh, very definitely. The partisan labeling, I'm sure, was...Well, the factors that helped me to be a successful candidate was, one, the good advice that we got early in the game, very early in the game from the Democrats who had had the experience. And their advice was primarily the door knocking, close contact. They had lots of advice, some of which we never took, which, you know, you end up sorting that sort of stuff out.

The fact that there was DFL support in the state, the fact that Watergate had damaged the Republican image to a large extent, and that people had spent a considerable amount of time becoming exposed to...oh, I suppose, for the lack of a better term, corruption in government. They had seen the judiciary hearings, they had seen other hearings. They had seen a lot of analysis of political activities. And they were looking for a straightforward, honest, warm kind of government. They wanted to have very little soft suds soap and they wanted to have a straight kind of thing.

And one of the first things that was asked of me when I announced: are you going to be honest? And of course no one says no to that kind of question. But for one reason or another, I said, "Yes, as honest as I can be." And I received a sermon for having qualified it. They wanted you to be *perfectly* honest. They didn't want any qualifications on your honesty. They wanted it real. And so I soon learned that one doesn't qualify that question, that statement. The feeling that we're going to change incumbents was also an advantage. "We want somebody new," was a

slogan that was used. And I had the advantage of being one who was new to the process. Part of my slogan...some of my slogans were, "Experienced in government but new to politics," which I think was a plus in the mentality of the people of Moorhead.

Let's see...what else?

**RH:** When you speak of them, people of Moorhead, they're often noted in the political realm to be a bit [unclear] on the conservative side. And the image that was sometimes attempted to paint for you was the "George McGovern of the Minnesota circuit."

**DB:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RH:** Did you find that to be any type of a factor? Do the people pay attention to those type of labels at all?

**DB:** Oh, I think they do. At least superficially they will respond to them. We've had the McCarthy and McGovern activities from college students. I believe more students were participating in the McGovern, which was the more recent election, presidential election...or lack of election. There was some attempt, I think, to associate me with the administration of...and the college and the liberalness of the college. I didn't come out very strong on my association with the college. I tried my best not to associate with the college in any formal way when doing political work. I talked about education but I didn't talk about Moorhead State College directly. I tried to broaden that. I tried to emphasize my rural farm background and hoped that those who heard that would believe in some conservative elements; would show that I could relate to the conservative elements. Bob Bergland was a definite advantage to my candidacy because he had set the precedent of being a hardworking, honest, willing-to-talk-with-people kind of guy. And he was of the Democrat party and so was I, so I think the coat-tailing was very much of an advantage for me. And on the ballot my name came second after Bob Bergland's, if I remember.

**RH:** Yeah.

**DB:** Is that correct?

**RH:** [Unclear] I think so.

**DB:** Yeah. Yeah, I was a little fearful of Anderson's name affecting mine, but even that came out good. Governor [Wendell] Anderson.

**RH:** Do you think in the way the new ballots have been set up and so on also was a factor? There have been claims, for example on the conservative side, that it's tilted the scales.

**DB:** Yeah, I don't know. Somebody told me that some studies were done that as much as eight percent of the vote was changed because of position on the ballot. And eight percent is a very high percentage. That could swing almost any election. I don't know. I'd have trouble believing

that, but I am...I'm very seriously looking at the issue of rotation or...ah...what's the other one? Two methods of changing the ballot. And...hmmm.

**RH:** I think rotation is probably the most well-known, too.

**DB:** Yeah, rotation is the most well-known and that's the one that...

**RH:** There's also been a call for returning to the...

**DB:** Changing.

**RH:** ...partisan.

**DB:** Yeah. Changing the...to offset the incumbency advantage or the majority party advantage to place the majority party in office second on the ballot. And I'm not sure which one I will finally choose, but I think there is...there has to be something done to offer some equity at the voting poll, at the polls. Yeah, I'm...I don't believe that a full eight percent can be swung by a position on the ballot but I think there is definitely some percentage. I would tend to half that at about four percent, but I...it...you know, my political experience is limited, and so I'll have to look at that issue more carefully.

**RH:** You mentioned a while ago that your opponent in the primary had an advantage in the fact that he didn't have to hold down a job also. Which leads one to wonder how you feel about the quote/unquote "full time versus part time" legislator?

**DB:** Well...[sighs] I've been told that the part time legislature gives more than equitable opportunities to young lawyers who want to develop an image for their practice so that they can enhance their contacts with clients, or potential clients. And that farmers who...especially grain farmers who have a reduced workload during the winter months have access and opportunities to go that are very definitely limits the small businessman's access to legislature, and that teachers who are busy during the legislative session in the teaching role have very limited opportunities to become involved. I think that's true, except that teachers, those teachers who leave the profession, a fair number of those get into politics. And I don't know if getting into politics is the choice that they make or leaving the teaching profession is the choice they make, or you know, which portion of that affects it.

Full time legislature...I think is a thing that should be done...with careful support so that other candidates, potential candidates can run in at least an even battle against an incumbent. And there are some people who consider moving the primary back, which would, I think, probably do nothing more than just change the party affiliation. But there should be some limit as to the amount of time a person could put on a political campaign for election. I don't like to see a state battle, for example, run over an excessive length of time of which would probably be more than six months, because the average person could not leave employment more than six months and would just not have an opportunity to fight a reasonable battle against an incumbent.

**RH:** In that vein, would you think something in the area of public financing of campaigns would be valuable also?

**DB:** Yes, I think it would be. I think it would make it cleaner. Because now persons have to seek the support of their special interests. After Watergate, there was great caution by special interests and their donations. The Ethics Committee of Minnesota and some of the campaign practices at the national level, I think, may reduce that drastically. And that'll have to be carefully monitored.

Let me get back to the...a full time legislature. The problem right now is that in Minnesota we're currently thinking in terms of three items. One is the full time legislature, the other is increased salary for legislators, and the third is reduction of size of legislature. And these are going to be enmeshed and tradeoffs are going to be made, and that's the problem with full time legislature. I would like to see it without a tradeoff for size or salary. But the current situation is that it will have to be a tradeoff. The recessionary economy will mean that money will have to be saved. And there's a lot of thinking in the metropolitan area that the size is just too large...excuse me, the number of legislators is just too large to continue.

**RH:** Do you find that to be the case in outstate legislative...in the outstate districts also?

**DB:** [Sighs] Well, League of Women Voters has supported reduction in the legislative size and I am not sure why. I just don't understand their thinking on that. The rural person has got [unclear]...has got just too much geography to cover, he's got too many school districts, he's got too many county people, too many municipalities to deal with to be effective. I'm fortunate in Moorhead where I've got only one school district, I've only got one county office, and I've only got one city to work with. And so it's not that difficult for me to pick up the phone, ask a person in the unit of government that may be affected by a certain bill, talk to two or three people in the field, and have a fair assessment of the problem as it would affect my district. Where somebody in one of the other larger rural districts, he has to make at least ten, fifteen phone calls or letters, but phone calls because of the...of the speed needed. And he may still not have a consensus. And the members themselves at the local level don't have a chance to talk it over. And so the input that the legislator will receive hasn't been carefully thought through.

There are those who say that if we reduce the size to be more effective...but if you reduce the size you'll also have fewer people to respond to probably a larger number of lobbyists, and changes could be made in the negative more quickly than in the positive, I suspect. Hmmm. I'm just not willing to move in that direction unless I see better...a better reason to do so.

**RH:** Along in that area of legislative size and so on and apportionment, it's been claimed that a growing conflict area between groups shall we say rather than political parties is the in-state versus outstate.

**DB:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RH:** In your...so far at the Legislature, have you seen that be a problem?

**DB:** Ah...yes and no. Ah...there's humor and sensitivity about the concept rural and urban. And in one of the DFL caucuses there was a resolution to consider a rural, urban, and suburban split. And that didn't even get off the ground because it had the danger of further splintering and so on. Hmm...there is a group that calls themselves the Rural Interests and they're cautious to preface any statements that they make that this is not to the exclusion of urban, but this is an emphasis on rural. Ah...yes, I think there's some issues that will become highly sensitive on an urban/rural split. Minnesota has got fifty percent of its population in the seven metropolitan county area, a very condensed urban setting. And then the rest of the fifty percent is scattered throughout Minnesota with large population centers. Duluth, I suppose Moorhead would qualify, Mankato, and a few of the...and St. Cloud and a few other communities. Moorhead being part of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area is still not considered urban by any sense of the imagination by fellow legislators.

I don't know how severe the rural/urban problem is. Constituents here tell me that we never get anything done, all the money spent by urbanites...And then talking with some of the urban legislators, they say that all of your blessed highways never get us an opportunity to do some mass transit things. [Chuckles] So you know, there...As long as the legislator is a common, decent person and not going to allow emotions to run rampant, I don't think that'll become too serious a problem. I think we'll be able to work it out. Because the urbanites see the need and the blessings of rural communities, and I think they can be sold on the need to enhance rural opportunities so that urban problems don't become further aggravated. As long as they don't want to take...you know, as long as they're not asking for more than their percentage of the pie, we'll be in good shape.

**RH:** You mentioned an example of urban mass transit. Governor Anderson a year or two ago in his State of the State address also talked about that. What other areas would you see that could be a potential conflict?

**DB:** You mean on urban/rural lines?

**RH:** Yeah, I was thinking specifically the experimental cities program seemed to generate a *lot* of conflict in that area.

**DB:** [Sighs] Yeah, I'm not too familiar with that. Ah...well, the education, the support for education, and the two point five weighting for school districts that had large numbers of AFDC mothers would...was very quickly looked at as a possible support to urban areas more than rural. And the assumption, of course, was made that there are more AFDC mothers in urban settings than there are rural settings. And so therefore they would get a better benefit of this item. Ah...that doesn't...that doesn't make me think it's a rural/urban thing, I think that's...An AFDC mother has less buffer money and is a lower income person and has less...therefore pays less taxes. So I don't think it...that that becomes urban/rural, I think that becomes a need to help the low income person, period, wherever they are. And I don't think that'll make that much of a benefit for the urbanite or the rural person, either one. So I don't know. I can't...in larger question very well because I just don't know what other areas there would be.



**RH:** You said that some of the factors which helped you in the election...you've isolated those. How about generally overall? I mean it was, by any standard, a landslide for the DFL.

**DB:** Well...

**RH:** And do you think those same standards, same factors helped?

**DB:** Yeah. The nation felt that it would be a good thing to put in new people, to drop the incumbents. And there was a definite bias in favor of the Democratic Party. I think those...on the national level. And I think those two factors were a great asset to me. Being a new person and being a member of the DFL...very definitely gave me an advantage.

**RH:** Do you see that bias continuing for the next few years?

**DB:** No, I don't. Ah...Well, another advantage locally, and I didn't go into that, was the health of my opponent. He made the mistake, I think, of coming back after convalescence to the platforms and speeches that he was making to talk about his health problems. He would quickly say, "Yes, I know of what the cost of hospitalization is. I've been there." And then he would elaborate on the fact that he had been there and how long he had been there and some of the feelings he had as an ill person. That will tend to shake the confidence of people in their electorate, in their candidate, I would think. That was a very definite mistake on his part.

**RH:** A strategic error in stuff, you'd say then?

**DB:** Right. Another strategic error, I ran an ad at the Friday before the election. It was...CBWT, I think.

**Unknown female voice:** [Whispers] Oh, excuse me.

**DB:** Oh, you're on. Okay.

[Pause]

**DB:** I ran the ad. And in the ad I had two elements. I don't recall verbatim the second one. But in the first one, I indicated that my opponent had not chief...had not gotten any bills out of committee which he had been the chief author. Of which he had been the chief author. And the second point was something about his presenting one point...let me see how I stated that. He...hmmm...would state one...would make a statement one way to a certain population, make a statement another way to another population. And I put in a qualifier saying that he could...he voted one way on a bill and then voted another on the second reading or on the third reading. And so that he could come back to a population and say, "I voted yes on this," or, "I voted no on this." And I'm enhancing and elaborating on the concept I put in. And it was true. We had some pretty good proof that that was a typical pattern. He was voting no the first reading. He was voting yes on all of the...or a good number of the weakening amendments. And then voting yes on the final passage, which would allow him to come out to a group who wanted that bill passed

for example, and he could say, “Yes, I voted for it.” Which was true, but he also voted to weaken it. He voted against it in the first passage, first round, so it’s a possibility in the first round it could have been dumped, or the weakening amendments may have destroyed the bill. So anyway, I wanted to present that concept to the voting public.

So I presented those two items on the Friday before the election. And I felt that running the ad Friday would give him an opportunity to respond either by Saturday or Sunday, and I would have a response to the response on Monday. I felt it would be wrong of me to run that Monday and have him stuck with no way of responding. I just wanted to be open enough and clean enough and...well, anyway, he didn’t think I was. And he hollered law, lawsuit, which I think, again, was a strategical error on his part. The adrenaline and emotions in our campaign crew Friday afternoon were high. We spent a lot of time re-checking our data, thinking through how we should respond to this, and just thoroughly frustrated and flustered, I guess, about the possibility of getting sued. Most of us had been novices (or still are) and being threatened with a lawsuit is not the most soothing kind of thing. And so we spent Friday night, most of Saturday, and parts of Sunday feeling, you know, here we go, we’re off to a lawsuit!

But I took a firm stand. And you know, if we went through the trouble of putting the research together to make the ad, we checked it again and it was valid and correct, then why should we back off. So we took a hard stand. And that was definitely to our advantage. Had my opponent not hollered lawsuit...And one will never know this, but had he not hollered lawsuit, but rather came back and said something to effect that yes, I voted no. Or, yes, I voted in this way, but I did it because we’re just too swamped with too many kinds of bills, and I was there to clean it out. I was there to reduce the paperwork. I was there to help the people. I was there to be the kind of legislator that will respond to constituents and not load up government ledgers with bills which affect every miniscule aspect of daily life. You know, he could have gone on a fine pitch of that kind, and could have damaged my attempt to fluster him.

But it ended up that we swamped him. [Chuckles] And he came back with a lawsuit holler. He threatened that all the way through the close of the election. In fact, the day that voting was taking place I was still being asked by his party and associates to come before the county attorney and justify my action, which I have never done. I feel that the case is dropped now at this [unclear – late date?], the possibility of a libel suit is unreal. It’s just...just not there. The possibility of my action being improper in relation to the Senate Ethics Committee for Campaigns is not there. I think he could have presented a question to them and they would have had to sit on it. And it’s my feeling that I would not have been affected by that. You know, they would have ruled in my favor. But one doesn’t know for sure.

Ah...it was a good experience. I don’t think I would have run that ad again had I known what I was going to get into, because I just don’t like the idea of lawsuits anyway. Anyone who goes around suing just doesn’t make me a happy person. And I just didn’t like to put that kind of thing before the voters in Moorhead, especially with Watergate behind us. Because some people did say it was a dirty trick. It was something...it...I was calling him dirty names and I was improper in my accusations against him. I disagree, but they...the fight aspect in that late in the campaign has caused, I suppose, some voter changes. And I don’t...I would really like to know how many

voters voted for me because of that ad and how many voters who were planning on voting for me left my support. I talked with maybe ten, fifteen people and the feeling I got from them was that no, they didn't like it, but if I had to do it or if it was a necessity to motivate other voters, they would go along with it. But they did not change their vote for as a result of that ad. And there were a couple of people who said, "Yes, thank God you came out and told the truth. And I'm glad you did and I voted for you because of the ad." I had two people who said that. So...one doesn't know.

**RH:** It's hard to tell.

**DB:** It's really hard to tell.

**RH:** Yeah.

[Brief recording interruption]

**DB:** So the ad was run and we let her go. Ah...you know, it'll be...one of the...one of my dear friends, a local lawyer I talked with after the election, and I said, "What should we have done?" And his very quick and prompt response was, "Give her hell. It's only two thousand." So apparently two thousand [dollars] is the maximum fine and he felt that since we had done our research, we should go ahead with it. I'm sorry that it embittered my opponent. He has not yet indicated anything other than a very cold hello at a meeting that I was jointly attending. But I've received no congratulations or condolences, either one, as a result of our being in the contest and my having won and his having lost. That I don't like to see. You know, I don't know how much thinking time he spent brooding or whatever as a result of my challenging him, but I just don't like to see a person get that embittered as a result of an action that I took. But...[sighs] life's that way, I guess.

**RH:** After the election then you had the organizational meetings a while after that for the caucuses and so on. And there was a question on if the caucus, the DFL caucus especially should be open or closed or whatever.

**DB:** I very promptly came out and said, "Yes, open." And I said so because I had been a follower and still am of common cause with Ralph Nader and just common decency, I guess. Now the questions before me and before the House, Monday next we will be asked to answer that question. And some new details have come before me. And that is that if we request the House rules to contain a statement that DFL...or that the caucus must be open, this would be the first time that the House rules, which are primarily relating to the institution of the House will go outside of those boundaries and affect the caucus, which has not been part of the House institution.

Ah...and I'm a little fearful of that precedent, and here's why. The Attorney General's interpretation of the open meeting law, which is another issue, but very closely related, is that if two or more people get together for the purpose of doing business, and are able to do business, make decisions, that it should be open. Well, for a vote...for a bill to pass or a resolution to pass,

it must receive sixty-eight votes. The total number of Republicans is only thirty-one. So if they caucus for the purpose of business, they are unable to do business, pass a resolution, or generate enough support to pass a resolution because they don't have sixty-eight votes among them. So with that line of thinking, if we pass an open...a required openness rule for the caucus, we as the DFL would be the only ones stuck with it, and the Republican minority would not be, if you take that interpretation. Ah...that I don't like.

The second problem is forcing decisions to be made before they come on the caucus floor. And I'm not too sure how real that concern is. But there has been a discussion about the possibility of not wanting to be before cameras and showing the emotions of a fight, which has happened in the caucus before, and there's some reluctance by legislators to get themselves, before the camera, into a highly emotional, pitched fight. So, to avoid that, they will end up making their decisions prior to going in, and they will settle their little feuds, attempt to settle their feuds before they go to the caucus. I don't know. I think that's pretty weak. But it's one of the arguments that go into it. The way I feel right now, if it were me to make the vote and make the final decision, I would still vote in favor of open caucus.

**RH:** But you'd prefer it not be the House rules, I take it...

**DB:** But I...

**RH:** ...but the DFL rules [unclear]?

**DB:** I would vote for...yeah. That it would be in the House rules. At...the way I stand right now. If I could have some assurance that we would have open rules for the caucus and it would not...that we would have a mandate or some statement that we would have open rules, open caucuses, without it being in the House rules, I would prefer that. But I don't think we can. As we stand now, there is a resolution which the body has adopted that we will hold open meetings until a majority of the members request it to be closed. I think that's pretty comfortable, I think that's pretty good, because a majority of the people will not like to stand before cameras voting to close the meeting. And I think that's a pleasant bias in favor of keeping the meetings open, so that the persons who are voting to close the meeting can be panned by television cameras and can be noted by the press or whoever else is in attendance at the meeting. So I think that's great. You know.

**RH:** As a freshman legislator, what struck you most importantly in your first sessions?

**DB:** [Sighs] [Pauses] The...well, not having been active in party politics in a higher level than county, parliamentary procedure was something I was acquainted with but not in detail. The various rules, the House rules, and the full legislative process I was not very much acquainted with. I had seen House Chambers and that was about it. I had not really studied any documents on which...you know, in terms of the rules they make decisions on. So the complexity of the process surprised me. But as I have spent time studying it, I realize the necessity for it and the elimination of problems that the rules are set up to do and I hope can accomplish.

The fact that we're a pretty large freshman body has made me feel comfortable. And I don't know what it would be like if there were just a few of us as freshman. But being a fairly large group, I've spent a lot of time with fellow freshmen organizing and getting access to as much information on how to be effective as possible. We've had the Chief Clerk before us for three sessions, about two hours each session, in which we've asked him to explain procedures and technicalities so that we could become more effective. The jockeying for positions, the basically conservative attitudes of the veterans in terms of changing House rules has surprised me a little bit.

But I think we can do a lot more than others have told me that we could do. We're able to be the swing vote on a number of items, us being forty-one strong, and I think we're going to flex those muscles when the questions come before us in which reform is a question...is a serious question. I think we as freshmen can come out and holler reform a little louder and support it more strongly than some of the veterans who do not want to insult their colleagues or do not want to get themselves in a bad, negative situation for a future bill. I personally don't care if I am not elected again because I screw up on a reform issue. I would prefer to get the reform issue out and voted on and passed than try and please somebody so I could stay in a couple more years. That's baloney.

**RH:** What committees were you able to work?

**DB:** I'm able to...I'm on...the committee assignment, I think, is a pleasant procedure. The House Speaker, who I think is a very excellent person, allowed interviews with members, all members, and we presented our vitae [unclear], and our preferences, and our concerns, and itemized our priorities in terms of the committees we wanted to be on. And then it was the House Speaker's sole decision, final decision as to which committee you were on. I ended up on Government Operations, Commerce and Economic Development, and Higher Education.

I am not the most enlightened in government operations. [Chuckles] But I find that that's going to be one of the more interesting of the three assignments. I will be involved with, I suppose, primarily government structures. Local...well, yeah, local units of government and the administration, rules that affect them and so on. And I *really* want to delve into that. Higher education, of course, I've been in that field for quite some time and will enjoy that, and should be able to influence a number of things. Being in a district which has an area vocational technical school, a four year public institution, and four year private institution will put me on the spot sometimes so that I can...will have to make some decisions which will affect one of the three and not the other two, and...or may be negative to two and favorable to one, and so that'll have to be carefully worked through. But I'm hopeful that I can do some good things there. Commerce and Economic Development is an excellent committee for a person from Moorhead to be on because we've got sufficient problems relating to the taxation of North Dakota and being a small community up against the largest community in North Dakota, namely Fargo, and the commerce that occurs as a result of that. That should be excellent.

**RH:** Do you find the seniority system operates very tightly in the Minnesota Legislature?

**DB:** Hmmmm...Not yet. It's been rumored that the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee is not very respectful of freshmen. I haven't been in a case where he would affect any decisions that I would make, so I don't know. Yeah, I think that there are some definite restrictions for freshmen because of seniority kinds of rulings, or of kinds of attitudes. I don't think it's a tight thing, I think that the Minnesota Legislature is—if I can believe the information that's been thrown at me since I've been there—is probably in better shape than a good number of states in terms of its openness, in terms of its access to research, and its willingness to change for the better. We've got a person funded by a number of sources who is in residence and will be addressing the task of reform; that would be his primary responsibility. And we've got a number of members, senior members who are very concerned about reform and are pushing for openness, reform, and general, healthy kinds of things that make government a more responsive unit to constituents. So yeah, I think seniority is there, but I don't think it's that tight...it's as tight as some people talk about it.

**RH:** In relationship to this session, some of the biggest things you'll see on the news are—other than obviously the budget and the surpluses and so on—are things like “Ban the Can” legislation and [unclear]. What do you find are going to be the most important or shall we say controversial bills this session? What are their chances in the Legislature?

**DB:** Yeah. I don't...I don't know. I...maybe I'm numb or something, I don't really know for sure, but...I can often find that I get into some things and I just think they need to be done. And I don't find them controversial for myself, I just see it as a fairly clear kind of thing that there is a problem, that there are anywhere from three to five alternatives or maybe even a few more, and some action needs to be taken, and two of those five alternatives are far superior, and we make a decision and we move forward. And then I find out afterwards that, wow, that was a controversial thing. Boy, you really got yourself into a hot one there. People are not going to be angry, not going to be happy, or this or that. So I don't...I'm not too worried about the controversy of it.

I know that “Ban the Can” is one that has received a lot of press for a long time. And I had a gentleman over visiting me this morning at the house and he is very much tied up in the financial aspect of production of soft drinks, and so therefore is not very supportive of “Ban the Can.” I couldn't get the son of a gun to sit down and look at the problem, you know. The reason why “Ban the Can” is before us I think is...is twofold. One is the need to recycle materials and the fact that aluminum is not that biodegradable, and secondly, that it is a very visual piece of litter. And I tried to bring the conversation around to, hey, what can we do to reduce litter? Secondly, what can we do to increase maximum usage of materials....

[Recording interruption]

**DB:** ...you have or need in your operation, including the possibility of recycling. And the emotions about what would happen if “Ban the Can” legislation came in just predominated. I just couldn't get the guy to come around and settle down and talk about solving litter problems and solving energy usage problems and solid waste problems. He just had to throw his concern about the fact that a retailer would not want to pay back deposit money to someone who bought his

item in another store. And just, you know...basically wasted my time. So I guess if you're saying what is going to be controversial, I guess I just have to count the ones in which the most people come and bother me and waste my time and don't present good...aren't willing to deal with the facts of the issue, I guess.

Handguns, I suppose, is another one. When the Governor mentioned it in his inaugural address it received far more applause than concern about drunken driving. And handguns kill far fewer people than drunken drivers. And you know, that...so I suppose we'll have to deal with the controversial ones, but...I'm afraid I'm just going to end up making a decision and let the controversy fly.

**RH:** It becomes amazing after a while what becomes a controversial issue, too.

**DB:** Oh, yes. I was told by a number of veteran legislators that you don't...you don't end up getting dropped or non-elected because you've supported a significant and major issue. You end up getting thrown out because you picked up some peripheral thing, and a number of people don't like it, and they get their volume of support, and you end up getting dumped. It's not that they don't like the new guy more; it's just that they like you less. We'll see what happens, I guess.

**RH:** Well, what are your particular concerns as legislator other than what you've mentioned in the area of reform?

**DB:** Reform, support for the city of Moorhead. That was one of the problems that came before me in a lot of my door knocking. Moorhead never gets heard, we don't have access to St. Paul, stuff like that. So I want to first of all serve Moorhead. Secondly, I want to do a good job in making this a great state to live in.

I'm picking up feelings that the educational television situation in the state of Minnesota is predominated by Channel Two out of St. Paul, and I suppose that will be a controversial issue for the urbanites, but if I can generate enough support and research, I'm going to tackle that one and attempt to provide state funding for educational television throughout the state of Minnesota. There are areas which are not receiving educational television now and there are areas which are receiving only Channel Two's service, which is...from what I can gather, pretty arbitrarily run. And programming decisions, especially, are rather arbitrary and made only by the management and not by participating school districts or participating public. Unlike KFME out of Fargo, which has a council unit which they have set up; it's a superstructure, I suppose. But it's a council unit which allows school districts to participate and have decisions implemented regarding program support and program material. And I think that's far more wholesome than what currently exists. That's one I'm definitely going to put some time in.

**RH:** One issue which both you and Senator Sillers I saw on television about...talking about health legislation, actually, health insurance legislation. Where do the possibilities look in that area for this session?

**DB:** Health services concept is before us, and I suspect that'll come through the Government Operations Committee, of which I am a member. This is the possible change of the existing welfare and corrections departments and possibly some support from education. And making that a threefold unit or calling it the human services component or department or whatever title they're going to put on it...that'll be massive, and it'll relate to the health issue. But I would like to see what can be done to improve the delivery of human services, which include health services, before I would like the state to get into a complicated health program. I would prefer that the national government give us a basic health policy for low income persons or for the general public which will help us relate to the medical costs that are just becoming astronomical. And *then* the state build a program that would fill the vacancy, fill the soft spots that the national government would not take care of, for example. We've got a migrant population; we've got an Indian population, a small black population. But we've also got other concerns—the heating costs, for example, which directly affect health—that I think we should look at from a Minnesota standpoint. I don't know. Hmmm. The Governor has recommended a comprehensive health program. And I'm not sure Minnesota should be the one to set up the first comprehensive health program. I think that should be done at the national level.

**RH:** You mentioned the Governor's message on [unclear]. Does the Governor provide a great deal of legislative leadership from your perspective? Or is it the Legislature itself which [unclear]?

**DB:** I don't there'll be much choice this year with the strong majority, a full DFL state office or...the state officeholders are all DFL people. And there's certainly going to be a lot of party loyalty, so that the possibility of going strongly against the governor will probably come more from the Senate than any other unit. I don't...it would surprise me if we defeat very many recommendations of the Governor from the House floor because of party loyalty. I don't think that should be, but I think it will...it'll come about. As long as the Governor provides good recommendations and a good, clear program. And his budget message left a few areas open and...I as well as other people will be looking at them.

The concept of a circuit breaker for property tax so that a person would pay a maximum amount of property tax based on some percentages and a cutoff at a certain dollar income level, I think, is dangerously costly. And I support the concept of reduced property tax but I just don't know about this circuit breaker concept. I think there's other ways of getting at it. Oh, we couldn't...we could get into some excessive costs there. The other...well, another concept the Governor proposed this year is a hundred and fifty million set aside which is brand new, a brand new concept. If that set aside is a sneaky way of holding some money so that the governor can make some decisions...that ain't going to be so. I'm just not going to support that. But if it is a cushion or a buffer against a possible non-actualization of tax revenue, then I think it's valid.

**RH:** So [what] you'd find in that area would be dependent on its ultimate purpose and the viability of some special proposals?

**DB:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah.



**RH:** What do you perceive in the next five, ten years of the state Democratic Party? Will it have the strength that picked up in this year, the elections or...?

**DB:** Only if we do an excellent job this year. And if we...if we can come out with all of the programs the Governor has proposed, we can implement this circuit breaker for property taxes, we can hold property taxes, we can support the municipalities and the school districts, and we can keep higher education functioning as it is and not have very serious unemployment problems (which are not always of state making) then we will be in excellent shape. But if we end up with a need to tax in 1976 because of over-expenditure, if we end up with a deficit spending, if we end up with a complicated, entangled human services component which does not serve and probably worsens human services delivery, then we're in trouble. We're going to be in serious trouble.

I suspect what'll happen is it will come down the middle on something like that. We'll luck out on some, we'll get some things done comfortably, and others we will not. And it depends which one of those don't get done as to what'll happen to the Democrats in the next two years. But the business community as well as the laboring population is very concerned about what can be done with this recession. And if we can provide ways to hold the unemployment line and we can reduce the entanglement of paperwork and money movements for business, small business particularly, then I think we'll be in pretty good shape.

**RH:** What do you perceive the state can do relative to things like recession and so on? There's been talk of a federal tax cut.

**DB:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RH:** And there's been talk of an alternative of a hundred fifty million dollar contingency fund, a tax cut, things in that area. Can the state operate any effective programs like that to counter inflation or recession?

**DB:** I'm not a very good economist. I don't really know. Ah...[Sighs] I would think that if the federal government comes through with a tax break...I kind of like Humphrey's recommendation that there be a tax break up to a maximum of twenty thousand dollar income and not beyond that. That money will end up being spent in the grocery and basic areas of life and may cause a slight increase there but it will allow the quality of life for those low income families to hold and be in better shape and will keep that area of employment moving, and then allow them to spend a little money in the housing and other areas. Well, not housing, but home furnishings and that sort of thing...area, so I don't think it'll worsen the situation.

The Governor at the state level wants to put some money in housing. It depends on how he puts the program together. There's three ways. One, he could just allow people to borrow against the forty-five million, those who were low income or some qualification like that and needed housing; they could borrow against the forty-five [million]. I don't think that's a good idea. Secondly, he could make a program where the money would be set aside for certain populations and pay the...subsidize the commercial lending group, and I think that would be better. But even

better yet would be the possibility of subsidizing while their income is low and non-subsidizing as they increase their income. So that if a family had excessively low income, the interest to gain money to build a house could be as low as one, two percent. And as they increase their income, then we would reduce our state support for that subsidy. And so we would not entangle a large amount of state money and we could provide support to a far broader population. That I would like to see. And I hope that kind of program is what he does with his forty-five million.

What else in the housing and...?

**RH:** I was surprised...

**DB:** Yeah.

**RH:** ...when I saw the federal income taxes...state income tax forms. At the federal it seems a lot less progressive than the state. Is there...? And people have talked of change in that structure so basically someone making under [unclear] dollars a year would wind up paying little if any state income tax. So has it been a consideration there?

**DB:** I think it's now a family of four with less than fifty-four hundred [dollars] would not pay tax in Minnesota. I may be wrong on that. [Sighs] Hmmm. Well, income taxes have lots of...have many problems. But I think they're better than any other taxing system we've got. Sales tax puts a heavy burden on the low income person because he must buy consumer goods, and usually the ones that are taxed—with the exception of food, probably—but he's got to buy food, and clothing, and basic essentials, and that's a bigger percentage of the income than the more wealthy. So property is the same thing. Housing is a bigger percentage of the low income person's money than the wealthy. So I think for those reasons income tax has to be the major tax.

And we rank about eighth in the nation as to severity of income tax. But we don't rank very high for sales tax and property tax in the nation. And twenty-eighth you know, of out of thirty-five for sales tax. So I think we're going to have to live with those. And maybe...I won't be on the Tax Committee and won't have that much time to study the complexity of taxation this round, but maybe we have to look at the groups that are being penalized by various rulings, tax rulings, state tax rulings and see if we can't correct that. I think the bigger problem is at the national level. And I'm very glad to see the Ways and Means Committee lose its previous chairman. And hopefully we will get some of these tax loopholes filled. And a *lot* of effort should be spent filling up those tax loopholes.

**RH:** Well, one of the last things I suppose I should ask before I end the interview is your personal political future, if you have one planned or...?

**DB:** [Sighs] Good question. No, I don't...I'm the kind of guy who like A.S. Neill, who is the author of Summerhill [Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing], and he wrote this in his book, "The kind of guy I like is the person fifty years of age or older who really doesn't know what he wants to be when he grows up." And I think that's me. I've been doing...I've been primarily in the area of education and more broadly, I suppose, people helping. But I don't know

what I want to be when I grow up! I've got lots of opportunities open to me...and we'll play it by ear, I guess.

The first and primary concern is my family. If my political career, if there is such a thing, is going to damage my relationship with my children and my wife, then I will drop it. I will drop the political involvement. If we can maintain a quality family life and I can still be an effective politician, then I'll stay with it. And of course I've got to be reelected. But I would probably stay with it. I don't envision anything beyond being a legislator or possibly a senator at the state level because senators have the advantage of a four year term rather than a two year term. But I would probably stay in the Legislature and work towards being a committee chairman and let it go at that. I think that would be sufficient. And I would look in terms of what the family problems would be, and if they were serious I would quit, if they weren't then I would probably hang around for a couple more terms or as long as I could be a comfortable person in the Legislature.

I find that the readings I have and from even my own personal experience that if I change occupation...not occupation, but if I change the kind of work I'm doing every three to five years, I become more enthused in it, I do a better job with it. I find that I develop...feel comfortable with the new challenge and can do new things. As I get older, that may change. The advantage of being a legislator is that that kind of change occurs on a daily basis. There's always new things, new issues, new programs that you can become involved in. And you can pick and choose the ones you want to aggressively pursue, and support with less aggression the ones that are of definite concern and need but just don't happen to suit your priorities of time and energy. And you can delegate and accept research reports and so on. So I find it a comfortable way of life except for the time that it burns up and inability to be with the family on an evening when I would like to do so. So to answer your question is...I'd probably look at it for another term.

**RH:** Thank you very much.

**DB:** Thank you.

[End of interview]