

Interview with Former Governor Elmer L. Andersen

**Interviewed by Mark E. Haidet
Minnesota Historical Society**

**Interviewed on February 9, 1978
in Governor Andersen's St. Paul office**

MEH: In a previous interview [August and September 1975] on your governorship, Joanne Baldwin recorded your recollections of the political problems that you encountered during your administration and your impression of the Highway 35 charges. Before proceeding with the discussion of your recollections of the recount and your involvement in the 1966 gubernatorial contest, I would like to ask a few additional questions on these topics. First of all, what was your impression of then Lieutenant-governor Karl Rolvaag and what type of relationship existed between the two of you?

ELA: Well, I thought well of Karl Rolvaag as a person. I did then and always have; I think he's a very decent man. We knew he had a personal problem then, as he has continued to have, which most recently has led to his leaving the Public Service Commission. I guess any relation we had at that time was one kind of lacking of much relationship. I don't recall that our paths crossed very much. I certainly didn't think of relying on him for anything and he didn't interfere with me. He just was standing by as the lieutenant-governor. I had also served in the Senate when he had been lieutenant-governor and the presiding officer of the Senate and always thought he presided very well over the Senate. So, I had no ill will toward him. I didn't rely on him and didn't expect anything of him.

MEH: Today, the governor and the lieutenant-governor are elected on the same ticket, but how did you feel about that at the time when you were working with the...

ELA: It really doesn't matter much because the lieutenant-governor as a state official is a nonentity. I mean there is just nothing that he can do or is required to do. He can be helpful to the governor if he chooses. So, I suppose there's some slight advantage in having them both of the same party. For example, had they [Wendell Anderson and Rudy Perpich] not been, I guess Mr. Perpich wouldn't be governor now because if the governor and lieutenant-governor were of different parties, the governor could hardly become a senator and then let a person from the opposition party become governor.¹

¹In December 1976, Wendell Anderson resigned as governor. Lieutenant-governor Rudy Perpich was then elevated to the office of governor. Perpich then appointed Anderson to the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Walter Mondale upon his election to the vice-presidency.

From a practical standpoint, the main function of the lieutenant-governor is to preside over the Senate. That's all he does. Then he only presides over the Senate when it is sitting as the Senate and not when it's sitting as a committee of the whole. So, it's a very limited...I'd say it's about the choicest spot in state government today because it absolutely pays the most for the least amount of work. I suppose there's some slight advantage in having both of those offices in the same party, but I don't see that it's made much difference since that became the law than what had been the case before. I'm not aware of any significant differences, really.

MEH: What was your campaign strategy prior to the Highway 35 issue and what effect did that issue have upon your strategy?

ELA: Well, I was very much involved in the business of being governor and didn't really have a campaign strategy. I was just trying to be a good governor. I relied on performance resulting in support and, I guess, that was just about it. I just went about the work of the governorship and traveled very extensively; I appeared everywhere. So, I guess the strategy was to try and get everywhere I could and do as well as I could and hope that the people would appreciate it.

I guess I put priority on good government function, one might say, to a fault. I know one issue that I'm sure hurt me that would illustrate that. Our highway commissioner came in one day with a proposal of how we could have more money for highways. He suggested that we close up a lot of unneeded snow plow garages around the state that were obsolete. In the old days they needed a plow in about every little community because the range of the plows was quite limited. Almost every town had a little highway garage and a family or two that lived in the town as a result. As time had gone on and bigger equipment was developed, the garages were located in centers that might be 50 or 100 miles apart. But they never got around to closing these little garages because it was such a sensitive thing in every little town; it meant a couple of families and a couple of jobs. But I told our highway commissioner to go ahead and close them if we didn't need them. That really became such an issue in so many little communities that felt they were struggling for survival. The fact that it was money that might better be spent for highways didn't really count that much. The good government issue was lost as against the provincial issue of a small town wanting to keep a garage and a couple of jobs. As I say, we may have tried to do too much. I know that on that particular issue we alienated many people who felt that we should have let those garages stay where they were.

When the highway thing² came along that...They had concocted this scheme and had been trying to get somebody to use it. They had been to different radio stations and to different papers and nobody would, as they said then, touch the story because it wasn't true; there was nothing wrong with the highways. But they had to get somebody to break the story. They finally did in Washington. Either through Humphrey's office or Blatnik's office, they got a Minneapolis newspaper man of national prominence to print this alleged charge. That kind of created the issue.

²Refers to the controversy surrounding the construction of Interstate 35.

My main concern and what really upset me was not so much what it might do to my campaign chances, but what it was doing to the state of Minnesota. There was some pretty serious charges being made which, if true, could hold up funds for Minnesota. In fact, they charged that Minnesota was about to lose funds, and this led me to believe that they must have a way of shutting them off. The Secretary of Commerce at that time was a man named Luther Hodges, a fine Democrat from North Carolina whom I had known through Rotary activity--he had been an international president of Rotary and I had been active in Rotary. So I called him up and alerted him to the fact that somebody might try to get him to sign a paper denying or holding up funds to Minnesota based on this alleged scandal. I said: "All I ask of you, Luther, is don't sign it on somebody else's say so." There were Minnesotans in the department at that time who were part of this whole scheme and I knew they were up to no good. But I thought I knew Hodges well enough to know that, if he were alerted, he'd watch for it. And sure enough, he told me sometime later that that attempt was made, he caught it, and that when he checked, he found that there was no basis for it. So he didn't sign it. So the worst that they were charging didn't come off. But enough came off to have made enough of a difference to enough people to have changed the outcome of the election. As to how it changed the strategy of the campaign, there wasn't much time to change anything because this thing was sprung just a few days before the election. When charges are made all one can do is refute them and in this case there wasn't time to get the refutation until right after the election. Of course, the whole thing was dropped; there was nothing to it. So, it was a Watergate style, dirty trick that worked. But, as I say, the whole thing that concerned me the most then, and still does to some degree, was that people would jeopardize the whole state's welfare in order to win an election. That I thought was a pretty despicable thing--to besmirch the whole state of Minnesota and to put it in deep trouble on an important program. The highway program at that time was moving at a high speed and the curtailment of funds or the holding up of funds was a big, big, serious thing. But my strategy didn't change a great deal because the campaign was almost over at that point.

MEH: Can you recall how you felt on election night as the returns were coming in?

ELA: Not too specifically. Sure, I was certainly disappointed. It was clear that it was going to be a close election. I knew in 1960 that it would be a close election in 1962 because many of the Democrats who supported me in 1960 and told me they were supporting me, said they were doing so because they had to get rid of Freeman and that they'd be back in 1962 to get rid of me. It was an uphill run to be elected governor in 1960 when Humphrey was re-elected by 250,000 votes and Kennedy carried the state of Minnesota; I was only elected by 23,000 or 25,000 votes. So I knew that it would be very, very difficult in 1962. In addition, the Republican cause wasn't very strong at that time and the party was weakened by the split between conservatives and so-called liberals which still exists. So the Republicans weren't all that unified and I figured the Democrats would be more unified in 1962 than they were in 1960. So, I can't say it was a complete surprise, but it was a disappointment because we felt we had accomplished quite a lot working toward the Taconite Amendment, the Voyageur National Park, and other things. But I had only been in office for two years and to have part of those two years taken up with a campaign for re-election, leaves little time to do a great deal. So it was a disappointment like any contest one enters and loses. But it was no enormous thing because I knew that the odds were a little against me at best.

MEH: The initial returns showed Rolvaag up by 58 votes. What strategy did you pursue in the following weeks that enabled you to win certification by the state canvassing board?

ELA: The first thing that happened, I think, was that his people had some precinct returns corrected and that led to the re-opening of counties that had officially completed their canvass. Well, when it was that close both sides were checking every precinct for weeks. The lead was flopping back and forth almost daily depending on who was finding errors. It was really kind of incredible how many errors were being found. There again, I don't know whether it was strategy or not. People were just rechecking the returns. At the time when the canvassing board was to report, we happened to be ahead and that's how it was done. But both sides were canvassing all the precincts. It finally worked out that we were ahead when the canvassing board made its report.

MEH: What were your general feelings as the recount proceedings dragged on and on?

ELA: I was, I guess, disappointed about one thing. The judges were not going to do the counting themselves which, obviously, was just about an impossible job. But it was clear to me that there was...I felt there was going to be some hanky panky, if it were possible to do it, because the DFL brought in some so-called experts in recounting from Detroit. Well, if all one is going to do is recount the votes to get an honest result, one doesn't need experts. Anybody can count if the goal is to get an honest result. But the fact that they brought in some Detroit experts indicated to me that they knew some tricks or devices or ways of doing something to produce a result rather than to just get an honest recount. So, I was concerned. Then, the system which was set up seemed likely to have strange results.

I decided that there wasn't anything I could do because I had to go on being governor. Karl could spend all his time on the recount, which he did. I put my case in the hands of good lawyers and the good team of people working with them. I thought I would just go on being governor and, if the result was negative, I would give it up. I decided I wasn't going to get personally involved in a great, big struggle over the recount; I certainly didn't want to get into any rivalry over what kind of snide tricks could be devised to effect a result. We just got good lawyers and good people. I can remember that some of our people felt that the outfit from Detroit was seeking every loophole to miscount. They didn't have a high impression of integrity of that outfit. As I said earlier, if it was a matter of just getting an honest count, one doesn't need experts. If one has the combination to a safe, he or she doesn't need expert safecrackers to open it.

MEH: Looking at Rolvaag's administration, what was your impression of the governor as a leader and of Sandy Keith, both as a lieutenant-governor and as a possible political rival?

ELA: Well, I think Rolvaag meant well. I'd say that one of the things that might be remembered most about his administration was really a carryover from mine. (I was so interested that some park somewhere was going to be named after him because of the good work he had done in conservation. They withdrew that idea, incidentally.) I had established a conservation study

commission under a fellow named Henry McKnight and it had made an excellent report. The commission had worked very hard gathering together information about the resources of the state. I felt that we should have very important programs in all areas of our resources--the Taconite Amendment for the mining resource, and something for forestry, recreation, water, and wetlands. The commission's report advocated a very broad scale program which laid a framework for many years of development. This was picked up and carried on to his credit by Karl and his administration. Many of the proposals came to be. So I think he did pretty well in the area of conservation.

Unfortunately, some of the program, I think, is now falling away and even being undone which is too bad. Specifically, the terribly important wetlands program was set up and carried on by the state to acquire wetlands for wildlife habitat. Farmers tended to want to drain land in order to make it productive. They can't be blamed for that and why should they have the burden of maintaining wetlands for wildlife habitat. So it was decided that the state should acquire wetlands and it did acquire quite a bit. But now that whole program has petered out and the control of wetlands has been given back to the counties. Well, based on previous history, the counties are not going to have a very broad gauge approach to wetland preservation. They're going to be more inclined to drain the land, put it into production, and put it on the tax rolls. County boards aren't much for creating parks and taking land off the private rolls; they're quite the opposite. So, some of the programs that were carried on pretty well by Karl and, I think, to a degree by Harold LeVander, are now falling away, which I think is unfortunate.

But I turned back to my business, which I had been away from, and other activities. So, I guess I wasn't really following Rolvaag's administration. But I think he did pretty well. He always had this personal problem that was bound to limit his effectiveness and his effectiveness with his own group. One just doesn't command the respect or the following that one needs if he or she has a weakness like a serious drinking problem. There was no question that he was an embarrassment to the office, to the state, and to his people at different times during his governorship. That was why they got into the big hassle about wanting to replace him--he was an embarrassment to them. It's too bad because I think Karl, as a human being, is a very decent man. I don't think he ever wanted that Highway 35 scandal. He tried not to have them do that. He knew it was phony and he's a decent enough person...He'd rather lose than win dishonestly. Others didn't have the same principles that he did. I never ascribed to him the fault of that dirty trick deal. That was other people in that. So, I think it's too bad that Karl has had this personal problem that has had a limiting effect on his capabilities. Finally, it has led him to feel he shouldn't be in public office and he has resigned. Too bad.

MEH: What was your opinion of Sandy Keith as a lieutenant-governor?

ELA: Well, I have to smile when I think of Sandy Keith. He was a very attractive man--young, handsome, talented, eager, energetic, public-minded. I don't think he was a narrow, selfish, greedy person. He was an expansive, fine fellow who wanted to serve the public interest and had a natural ambition to get into office in order to do it. I had all positive feelings towards Sandy Keith. If he

had won the primary that Karl won, I think he probably would have defeated LeVander in the general election. I also think he would have been an outstanding governor. I had very strong, positive feelings about Sandy Keith. I had known him quite well in the legislature.

MEH: What was your reaction to the news of the Sugar Hills meeting and the subsequent events in the DFL party?

ELA: As a Republican, I thought 'Well, there they go again'. They really get into bitter internal power struggles. I kind of thought of it as a knife fight, although it didn't get physically violent. But the psychological effect was the same. They may be sharpening their knives to get into another one now. So, there was kind of a detachment about it. I suppose there was some degree of amusement, but it was no great surprise. I didn't take it too seriously because it was the other party. It would have been different if it was our party. But again it was a conniving scheme to get power.

MEH: Do you feel that the meeting was a scheme, that it had been planned to bring up the governorship?

ELA: Oh, I guess I don't recall all the details of it now. But as I remember it, the net result of it was that they got together--I don't know how pre-arranged it was--to just face the fact that Karl was an embarrassment. They wanted to get rid of him and the question was how to do it. They decided to use Keith. I think that was the basic thing that was involved. They might justify it on the basis that something had to be done. Others could justify it on the basis that somebody has power and other people want power and so there is a contest. I always had a high regard for Keith's personal aspirations and standards and moral and ethical righteousness. I thought he was a good man. So, I wouldn't ascribe a whole lot of mean motives to Sandy Keith. I really don't know whether any of them had mean motives. But the basic idea was a power struggle to kick someone out and get someone else in.

MEH: During the months prior to the Republican state convention, what was your attitude towards seeking the party's gubernatorial endorsement?

ELA: Well, it was surely ambivalent. There were times early in the year when, if I had decided to go all out to get the endorsement, I probably could have done it. My main feeling was that I had worked very hard as governor, I thought I had made a good record, and I just wished the party would unite and come to me. I thought I had earned their support. The party was divided; some of them thought I was too liberal. So there was this kind of estrangement--they weren't really crazy enough about me to come and say: "Come on and run and we'll really support you" and I didn't want it bad enough to go and plead with the party to nominate me again. I was willing to run if the party was really willing to unite behind me, but lacking that, it didn't make that much difference to me. I'd keep doing what I was doing at the business which needed me. It went that way all along. I remember one meeting at my home with a group from Hennepin County. The folks said: "Look, if you'll really commit yourself to run now, we'll commit ourselves to support you." But there wasn't quite the united, *strong* desire that I hoped might develop.

Then, shortly before the convention, some people were very concerned as to what was going to happen to the party. They said they were going to lose and they thought I should let my name be submitted. As I look back on it now, I guess if I had to do it over at that late stage, I wouldn't have let my name go in. But I did.

The convention got snarled up. I was getting a few votes, but the main votes were being split between John Pillsbury, Jr. and LeVander. I could see that there was the making of a complete shambles of that convention. So I met with other leaders and outlined a plan that was going to eliminate me, but that would resolve the issue so that they'd get a candidate. I thought there was a chance there that they could just fly apart. So I went before the convention with this plan that involved my withdrawing and a series of votes that would result in the selection of a candidate. I had told them that to me...I remember one newsman, Bob O'Keefe, who's still with the St. Paul paper. Newspaper people usually don't get emotionally involved, but I remember that he came up to me after words with tears in his eyes because he thought I had given up so much in order to try and resolve the party problem. He thought I should have been the candidate.

But I remember those parts of it--the estrangement between the party and myself, the last minute entrance, the stalemate, and the resolving of it. I felt real good about it; I just felt good that they got a candidate. Then it worked out well. The party did get together and Harold went on to be elected. Of course, he was aided by the fact that the DFL was so divided. They endorsed Keith, but Karl ran in the primary and won it. It was a favorable situation for a united Republican party and Harold LeVander won. He and I have been the only two Republican gubernatorial victories in 25 years. The last real Republican victory I had been involved in was in 1952. From then on there just hasn't been much.

MEH: The DFL convention was a week before the Republican convention. What type of effect did that convention have upon the Republican convention?

ELA: Well, the fact that they had endorsed Keith was one element of weakness. It's a pretty bad thing to discredit or disown a governor. On the other hand, Keith was a well-known as an able, articulate, attractive candidate. I think the general feeling was that the DFL had solved their problem and had come up with a strong candidate. I think the Republicans realized that they had better get together and put on a strong campaign if they wanted to win. Consequently, they were more susceptible to the kind of a proposal that I made to them. They couldn't have a great, big, drag out fight; they had to get together. I don't think anybody anticipated that Rolvaag would run in the primary or that he would win.

MEH: Well, you mentioned this meeting where you approached the party and came up with this suggestion. Can you describe more about the meeting? For example, who was there, what type of ideas were discussed, and how did everybody feel about the plan that was finally accepted?

ELA: I believe that I may have asked that they recess for a few minutes so that the people could

visit. We met in some upper room in the convention hall, which I believe was in the Minneapolis Auditorium. I remember that Al Quie was there. Val Bjornson was there. Pillsbury was there. LeVander was there. Nancy Brataas, who I think was state chairwoman at the time, was there. Oh, others including convention leaders and congressmen were there.

There was no great discussion, really. I just stated that it looked to me like there could be an impasse now, that it was a dangerous thing, and that I didn't want to contribute to it. I told them that I was willing to withdraw, but that it would only work if there was a structured procedure. I don't remember the exact details but I know that somebody was to be dropped after each ballot and that the winner of the final ballot would become the endorsee whether he had 60% of the vote or not. We suspended the rules in other words. The idea was that if they accepted the plan, they would be assured of going out of that convention with an endorsed candidate instead of a divided party. So I presented it to the convention and there was no big struggle over it; the party was just kind of looking for a solution. As I remember, they accepted the program by acclamation and proceeded on that basis. Within a couple of ballots, they had an endorsed candidate. It was very close between LeVander and Pillsbury. I remember that Pillsbury left the meeting and went back to his Hennepin County delegation quite pleased with the whole development; I'm sure he felt he was going to get the endorsement. I think that the Ramsey County delegation held the balance. LeVander got enough of the Ramsey County votes to win on that last ballot and become the nominee.

MEH: I remember reading in the paper that LeVander voiced a fear of the proposal because he thought that the people who were supporting you would end up supporting Pillsbury and that Pillsbury would win the endorsement.

ELA: Yes, I think there was a time when the people who were supporting me were seeing if they could move my support to Pillsbury. Well, it didn't move very easy. But that may have been why the LeVander people were a little concerned; they may have been aware of some of the efforts at one stage to see if the people who were supporting me would support Pillsbury. In a convention, there are all kinds of crosscurrents and all sorts of people working on different projects. A big, political gathering is quite a human experience.

MEH: Just one other question on the meeting. The paper says that it lasted about 2 to 2-1/2 hours. Is that right? And, if it is, was there divisiveness among the people attending the meeting? Did it take you a while to persuade them to accept the plan?

ELA: I do not remember that it was that long and I don't remember that there was great divisiveness. There might have been a lot of people who had something they wanted to say. I think there was a little caution on the part of the LeVander people; they were asking questions. I guess it may have taken some time to hammer out the details of the plan, but I don't recall that there was any argument. I was just a matter of...I think they were both pleased because I was withdrawing. That was one thing that pleased them a lot because I had started to pick up votes and they had started to decline. So, there was a possibility that I might have become the endorsee had it gone on. The

delegates might have felt that it wasn't going to be LeVander or Pillsbury, so we'd better take Andersen. That could have happened. But the thing that I thought was clearly going to happen was that there would be an impasse and that they'd just go out of there in pieces. But I don't remember that it was a terribly difficult meeting. Val Bjornson would recall it. He was there and Val has a very good memory. So, if you haven't ever taped or talked to him about that, he would be one to contact.

It may have been that others, who may have been talking to me about withdrawing, called the meeting. One thing somebody reminded me of not so long ago was that Al Quie had informed me that he didn't think the convention wanted me. So that may have been one stage in the development--to determine the basis on which I would withdraw. The base on which I was willing to withdraw was the assurance that there would be a candidate. I would not withdraw just because somebody thought I ought to withdraw.

MEH: Going back for a moment to 1964. Did the Minnesota Republican party support Goldwater?

ELA: No. That I was very much concerned about. At that time, there was this conservative-liberal conflict. People talked to me about staying out of it at that time and letting the conservatives have their day. They said that that might make it easier for me to be a candidate again in 1966. But I had always been very attached to Nelson Rockefeller. So I wanted to be invited in the caucuses and the conventions of 1964. The conservative group didn't like that.

Unfortunately, it was in either 1963 or 1964 that Nelson Rockefeller divorced his wife and married his present wife, Happy Rockefeller. That was a little scandalous at that time even though it was a very open thing. He became estranged from his wife, he met this other woman, and, instead of living some kind of secret way as say President Franklin Roosevelt did during his presidency and Kennedy with all his stuff...Nelson, it seemed to me, did the forthright thing. He got a divorce and remarried. I didn't think it was so dishonorable. In fact, I thought it was the honorable thing to do. Well, it, nevertheless, had more of an impact in 1963-64 than it would have today.

The group of Republicans that I was in didn't want to support Goldwater. It was difficult in Minnesota to really launch a campaign for Rockefeller, however. So we used the device of having a favorite son, Walter Judd. Judd was willing, though I think he felt that there could be a valid chance of his getting the nomination which we really didn't think could be. He may also have felt that he could, by being a favorite son, wind up somewhere. But in any event, our effort, if not a Rockefeller effort, was certainly an anti-Goldwater effort.

We went all through the caucus, county conventions, district conventions, and state convention battle on this delegate business. I became a delegate to the 1964 national convention in what was, I think, one of the most superb displays of skill; our group controlled that state convention. At the time, I think we felt that we really didn't have a majority of the votes very much of the time or at

any of the time. But there was a group of people--Wayne Popham, Lyall Schwarzkopf, John Moody--who, skillfully and in a parliamentary way, finally worked that thing out so that we wound up with most of the delegates. I remember that we had such a good time at that exercise of matching wits with the opponents. So the Minnesota delegation to that national convention in San Francisco was a Judd delegation. Minnesota had around 25 delegates and, it seemed to me, about 18 of them were for Judd and six or seven were for Goldwater.

But my involvement at the national convention was all with the Rockefeller group; I met with them and participated with them. I offered an amendment to the platform, as did a number of the Rockefeller people. The Goldwater people had that national convention just hog-tied, brutally tied up. We thought that the platform that they were adopting was so bad. So we had amendments for about every plank. But they staged the timing so that we were making our amendment speeches from between 2:00 and 5:00 in the morning when there was no TV audience. It was really something to go through.

But in any event, Minnesota gave more support to the Rockefeller planks and to the Rockefeller effort than any other state except, I believe, Michigan where Romney was being very helpful to the Rockefeller effort. So I was very much involved in 1964 in the anti-Goldwater effort. I thought it would be a disaster for the Republican party to nominate Goldwater.

We decided to have two keynote speakers in our 1960 convention when I was endorsed, to try to get the liberals and the conservatives together. The conservative keynote speaker was Goldwater and the moderate or liberal keynote speaker was then industrialist Charles Percy, now a U.S. Senator. He had just finished up an education study commission job and was emerging as a national figure. So I had known Goldwater. He was nice but I just felt that his candidacy was altogether too narrow a base of appeal to win a national election.

But in any event the activity in 1963-64 was certainly against Goldwater, though the Goldwater people were strong at that time. That was and still is a weakness for the Republican cause in Minnesota. Minnesota, basically, is a pretty liberal state and for those conservatives to think that they could have it all their own way made it very difficult for me as governor. I knew in 1960 that if I were to win in 1962 I had to broaden the base. I tried so hard in northeastern Minnesota and other parts to broaden the base of the party while this *strong* element in the party tried to narrow the base. It was a difficult internal problem.

MEH: Do you think that if you would have come out as candidates for Rockefeller that more Goldwater delegates would have been elected to the convention?

ELA: I think that if we had come out flatly as a Rockefeller delegation, it just wouldn't have worked because the public, was so negative to Rockefeller because of his divorce. I think that if we had come as a Rockefeller slate, the Goldwater slate probably would have controlled the state delegation.

But there was a validity about the Judd thing, too. When the Rockefeller thing wasn't going to go. . There are many interesting stories about that--the role of Eisenhower, the California primary...I was very much involved in that; I went to New York and met with the Rockefeller people. But in any event, when it was clear that Rockefeller wasn't going to be the candidate, there was a real attempt by the Minnesota delegation to find a place for Judd. But the whole Goldwater program had been worked out way ahead of the convention; they had all their people slated. The convention was just going through the motions. They had it so absolutely tied up. They didn't need to concede anything to anybody. They just had it. That was some job of organization, too.

MEH: Going back to Minnesota, following Rolvaag's convention defeat there was what David Lebedoff has termed "a tremendous outpouring of sympathy" for the governor. Were the Republicans involved in any way in bringing about this sympathetic reaction? What was their role, if any?

ELA: Well, I don't think their role would have been one of sympathy. I think if there was any role, they might have thought that they ought to go into that primary and vote for Rolvaag because he'd be the weaker candidate. There's always this matter of crossover, and I believe that history always shows that it never is as extensive as somebody thinks it's going to be. So, I don't think the Republicans would have had any great sympathy for Karl. I think they would have felt that the DFL had really kind of solved its problem. But I'm sure that there probably was discussion and there may have been some movement to go in and nominate Rolvaag. I don't really recall that that was a big thing or how much it amounted to or what.

But it was an interesting thing--how the public will blow one way or the other. There's no question that a sympathy developed for Rolvaag that led to his getting the primary victory. People dislike connivance and manipulation. There's still such deep resentment over that Highway 35 fraud that people still get stirred up when they talk to me about that. The same thing there. It may have been that the people who met at Sugar Hills may have been well motivated: "Look, in the interest of the state and the party, we really can't have a fellow like this in office. The responsible thing to do is to just do something about it." Quite a case could be made for that. But I don't remember that the Republicans were much involved in it. I don't think they really expected Rolvaag to win the primary.

MEH: After the Republican convention, the liberals and conservatives appeared to join together in support of LeVander.

ELA: Yeah. I guess that the conservatives felt that they'd probably won, though I'm sure Pillsbury wouldn't think of himself as a flaming liberal. But in any event, they did unite behind LeVander.

MEH: Were there any efforts made by the LeVander people to bring about this unity?

ELA: Oh, I'm sure there were, but they would know much better than I. The fellow who would know about that that I'm sure was active in it is Dave Durenberger. Harold LeVander himself

would also be a good source. They would know what they did to bring that about. By that time, I was back at the Fuller Company and was not that active in the campaign.

MEH: The election of 1966 was an extremely good one for the Republicans. They increased their control over both houses of the legislature and captured the majority of executive offices. Yet by 1971 the DFL controlled the government. To what would you attribute this reversal?

ELA: Well, many things, I suppose. One thing was that the Keith-Rolvaag problem which had caused the DFL a lot of trouble was resolved by that time. I think that LeVander's not running again was an element of weakness; they didn't have somebody ready to carry on. Had he run for re-election, that might have made some difference. Then, he had some issues during his administration that had stirred up people very much. This regional commission idea apparently caused great resentment out in the country and that was certainly a factor. Then, I think that the DFL came up with attractive candidates and a strong campaign. There were many different things.

The 1966 election probably was not a measure of Republican strength. It was to a greater degree a measure of the shambles that had been created in the DFL by their attempt to purge Rolvaag, their failure to do so, and their weak base of support in the campaign. Their candidate was the one the party had officially repudiated. Well, what kind of a position is that in a campaign? How could they then say "Come Vote for Rolvaag"? It was just an impossible situation for them to be in. All those things spilled all over the state onto legislative and other races. I'm trying to think what other issues there might have been to effect it, but I think it was just as much a disarray of the DFL as it was any strength of the Republicans. So, it wasn't that the Republicans were very strong and then got very weak. That would oversimplify it. They just harvested a completely distraught Democrat situation which adjusted itself.

They later had quite a contest between Jim Goetz and Doug Head. Head became the candidate, and although I'm sure the people who were for him thought he was going to be a strong candidate, he was pathetically weak. Then Wendell Anderson came along. I remember that somebody made some TV commercials for him that were exceedingly effective. They did the whole election; they just did it. It was a new kind of technique at that time and they just carried the whole thing. Goetz, who had been a very appealing kind of a person, was simply disregarded. Looking back on it, the Republicans would have done far, far better to have had Goetz as their candidate. Head was able and everybody thought he'd be great, but he did very poorly. I think that was a big factor. They had the better candidate, the better promotion of him, and they were unified. Keith was gone; Rolvaag, I think, was out of it. I think it was later that he was elected to the Public Service Commission.

MEH: Finally, I'd just like to ask what your opinions are of what condition is the Republican party in today and what's your attitude towards the 1978 election?

ELA: Well, I think that there are great opportunities in 1978 and great needs. I think it's really unfortunate for the state to be in a position where one party dominates the legislature so much. I think that there is much evidence to show that such domination leads to arrogance, possible

corruption, weaker government, and all sorts of unfortunate things. Many things are difficult for me to accept. For example, the enormous increase in legislative pay, making it a full-time job, and hiring hundreds of full-time employees is so contrary to what I think the legislative service ought to be, which is a part-time contribution by knowledgeable people who are willing to leave their own business or profession, give some time, and then go back to their normal pursuits. That's an entirely different concept now. Now, people are thinking of the legislature as a threshold for a political career. So all kinds of ambitious, aggressive, young people are running and being elected to office. They're passing bills and getting into things where they really do not have much knowledge or experience. Consequently, staff people are playing very important roles. Boy, I just think there's a whole lot that needs to be reviewed and redone. The people need to get into it. It distresses me how arrogant...like the power line dispute in which the plain, ordinary people seem to be getting pushed around pretty hard.

Well, the Republicans, therefore, have a splendid opportunity. But I don't believe the party is in as strong a position as it might be because of this narrow, conservative, far-right group that is so committed to their ideology. They almost seem to kind of want to lose to prove how virtuous they are. If they were to win, they'd think: "Well, we're appealing to too many people. We better reassess our position." They have such a narrow ideological base. They don't have all of the positions, but they're in pretty key places.

On the other side, there is some very effective leadership in the Republican party. For example, state chairwoman Loanne Thrane is doing, I think, enormously effective work. I think she has been largely responsible for the several Republican victories in legislative races. I think that of the last five special legislative elections, Independent Republicans have won four of them; maybe it's five out of seven, but it's a high percentage. She has been involved in every one of those campaigns. If they give her some opportunity, they'll do well. There are also a lot of attractive candidates. That's an encouraging thing. When I ran for governor in 1960, we had a hard time getting anybody to run for any other state office. It was considered so hopeless that nobody would run. That's the thing that I dislike to see today--the unwillingness of people to believe enough about issues, the party, or the state to just decide they're going to run because on a matter of principle, they want to have a certain position portrayed. Instead they jockey around like a bunch of chickens wanting to be sure they're gonna win. They'll run if Humphrey isn't running or they'll run if Mrs. Humphrey isn't running. Oh, I think it is such a weakening sort of thing. I kind of respect Al Quie who is running for governor. Dave Durenberger has assured the party that he is running for governor and Rudy Boschwitz is gonna run for the Senate. I wish there were more candidates, stronger candidates, and more offices up for election. But it's gonna be a fascinating year.

There's no question that Humphrey's death is going to make a big difference in the DFL party. Nobody is going to replace him very soon. Mondale may be in a position for the Vice-presidency; if he can take the time and exert the authority, he could create some discipline. But the way young Humphrey is popping around, it could lead to a tremendous internal struggle for power in that party. Wendell Anderson is in difficulty to a degree. I've always kind of admired Wendell Anderson. I observed him up in Princeton just the other night at a town meeting and, as I assessed that, I think

he still has rapport with the people. So I think it'll be hard to defeat him. What'll happen on the Humphrey Senate seat, it's a little early to tell.

I'd say the Republicans have a lot of opportunities, but they can certainly throw it away. I think it would be in the best interest of the state if we came into some kind of better balance because I think there have really been some abuses and extremes. It was back in the 1930's when the Farmer Laborites had everything their own way, that corruption got into the Highway Department. It led to the election of Stassen and the DFL never got back in power for a long time after that.

I think it'll be an interesting year. It always depends on the rank and file of people--just how much they'll participate. It isn't what the Republicans or the DFL are going to do, but whether or not people will go to their precinct caucuses and decide they want to do it. If they really don't like the arrogance that has crept in and kind of bosses that has crept in...The legislature, I think, has changed in character so much; I think to a great degree to a loss. If people realize that and want to change it, if they want less money spent, if they want greater freedom, or if they don't want the power company or reserve mining intimidating the state and kind of having it all their own way, the people have to get out and get to the precinct caucuses and take charge. Every once in a while that happens.

MEH: Thank you very much.