

Interview with Glen A. Sherwood

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Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by Cal Gower and James Robak

Robak: Today is July 20, 1977. This is an interview being conducted for the Central Minnesota Historical Center. We are interviewing Glen A. Sherwood from District 4B, correct?

Sherwood: Yes, a representative.

Robak: This interview is being conducted by Cal Gower and James Robak. Glen, when were you born and where?

Sherwood: Okay, in Tracy, Minnesota and '34.

Robak: Well, it's south-central, maybe it would be down, not too far from Marshall Country, down that way.

Gower: Could we have that exact date on your--

Sherwood: May 7th.

Gower: May 7th.

Robak: Okay, and your folks had lived there for quite some time? Farmers perhaps?

Sherwood: No, my dad was teaching at Tracy at the time. And both my brothers and I were born there. Of course, he continued teaching up until--oh, nine years ago--and you met him over here this morning. He has just, in a sense, made the grand circuit--he moved here to the old house

down by the road in 1905 as a two-year old. And now, just now is turning, at age 74, and building a new home. And it's really pleasing to me to see he's got that kind of vitality; he wants to tackle a project like that, so-- He grew up here. His folks were here at the old place and we ended up here in 1970.

Robak: Was Pine River a resort area in 1905?

Sherwood: I have to-- I don't know the history for sure, but I'd have to say really no, then, in the sense that we know it today. For sure it wasn't.

Robak: It wasn't commercialized.

Sherwood: No, no. At that time it was supposed to be another one of these big boom farming areas. Of course, it really never made it, although even on this 80 here, my grandpa and grandma raised six kids in the 80 and all of the kids are still living today. Two--three have a college education; three don't. They're in business. So, all I'm saying is that's what they could do then and you can't do that today. We like to say that we've really advanced, but that's what they could do then, and there's no way you could raise a family of six on 80 now.

Gower: But where did your grandparents come from?

Yeah. They--we're waiting on my dad here to give us the background. They were from--they were at one time from someplace down in the Tracy country for a little while, but now what happened prior to that--because my grandfather was orphaned at the time--around ten or so.

Gower: But your family has been in the United States for many years, many generations.

Sherwood: Yes, yes. My grandmother's maiden name on my dad's side is O'Brien. And Sherwood--so there's a lot of English tradition comes through that side of the family. And my

mother was a Cox and there was still more of the English there, too. So most of my background is English--British Isles or whatever.

Gower: And the Sherwood's had come here in 1905, was it?

Sherwood: Yes.

Gower: And your father taught at a number of different schools?

Sherwood: Yes, he started off at Blind Lake, just up here through the woods about fifteen miles--first year. And then when he got married, he and my mom both taught there for a little country school. And he tells us stories of hearing the wolves running at night out there. And the little home they lived in still up there. Well, from there, then--there was jumping around; they ended up at Tracy for a little while about the time we were born and then they came up to Brainerd. But most of my dad's career was at Central High School in Grand Forks. That's where he retired. My brother teaches in Grand Forks now.

Gower: And what is your own education background?

Sherwood: I've got a bachelor's, a Bachelor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota in history and natural science and then I've got a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in wildlife biology, Utah State University.

Robak: Did you attend high school in Tracy?

Sherwood: No. High school in Grand Forks.

Robak: You were interested in the environment and working right at that time, then?

Sherwood: Started--well really I suppose the roots to it goes back to my folks again, as things like that often do. Dad taught me the sort of consumptive side of outdoor use; that is, fishing and hunting. And my mom taught me the appreciation for it. She was the one who loved the wildflowers and the birds and that side of it. So it, I believe and am convinced, that gave me the balance. Well, back then, when I went into the University of North Dakota, there were not a lot of schools yet—certainly not the University of North Dakota—that had wildlife biology. So the undergraduate work was in history, which I have a long interest in, and in natural science; kind of a strange combination, maybe. But I taught one year after that--in '56 and '57, I guess it was, in East Grand Forks and I realized then that I would never be happy teaching history, so I went back to graduate school, into wildlife work, and proceeded into the profession. Worked for the state of North Dakota and state of Alaska a little bit; mostly for the federal government, for the Fish and wildlife Service, till 1970. And then you may recall that we were moving into the great environmental awareness boom at that time. And I was on the cutting edge of that and felt very strongly that the federal government was lagging in a particular--our service, Fish and Wildlife Service, because we had more than any other agency in federal government or anyone in the country; we had people. By training to real do something about the environmental problems and yet there was considerable amount of foot-dragging, so--happens you know. I made a choice when I resigned in 1970, moved over here to the old farm house to write about the environmental problems and wanted to see if we could make a go of it. For two years I did some writing and we did some small truck-farming, if you want to call it that, where we sold stuff by the roadside here from the shanty down by the road. And did some speaking engagements and we found that we could probably--looks like we can make a toehold. I wrote a couple of major articles for *Audubon* which is, was an important magazine to get into and--had indications that--a letter on

file that perhaps a field editorship would open up with *Audubon*. So it looked like we could probably make it writing.

Gower: Had you done some writing before that?

Sherwood: Well, a great deal of sort of scientific and sort of self-popular stuff through the Fish and Wildlife Service. There's a lot of writing involved in that--reports and--

Gower: Had you done some publishing before that?

Sherwood: A little bit. Not much, but a little.

Gower: So you were going sort of off--you didn't know exactly how that might turn out, the writing.

Sherwood: No. I didn't know. But breaking into *Audubon* looked like we could finally make it

Gower: Sure.

Sherwood: Well, then we were up to '72. I figured it would take two years to find out-- They were rough years, but then along came this political opportunity when Bill Walker, who is now the agriculture commissioner for the state decided not to run in this district again, and they were looking about for candidates of course, as the always do. I had run into Bill through his friend, Craig Nagel, who had been the publisher-editor of the of Country Printing of Pequot, and so my name was tossed in a hat and I ran in the fall of '72. And that was at the time when the DFL party was making a concerted effort to get the--gain the majority. (In the) state, they had never held the majority in both houses and the governor's office, ever, in the history of the state, had they held all three; and they had a chance for it so they went all out and of course the governor

was already in office-- Wendell Anderson. We had a primary here, which is probably worth mentioning.

Gower: Can I ask just a couple of questions here? One, just exactly what does this district encompass?

Sherwood: Okay, it's a large rural district. It covers all of Cass County; it covers a major portion of Wadena County with the exception of the city of Wadena and the city of Sebeka, and those four townships over there on that western side; so most of Wadena County, portions of Morrison County – actually the four northern townships of Morrison County--six township in southern Hubbard County and then a piece of western Itasca County, including both organized and unorganized portions of Itasca.

Gower: So, it's a large district geographically.

Sherwood: It is, yes. Very large. It's not the largest in the state but in terms of the distribution of people and of reaching them, I think it is among the representatives. If you get up into, let's say, Lake County or something like that, that's bigger – I mean that district – but there are (?) people spread, say, to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area or some of those areas. I have a huge district and I like it. I like the rural nature of it. The biggest communities that I have are Cass Lake, Walker, Pine River--so they're not big communities and I'm comfortable with it. All the bigger communities are just outside the boundaries--Bemidji on the northwest, Wadena southwest, Brainerd southeast, and Grand Rapids northeast. All of those sit outside the boundaries of the district. I'm encompassed by those bigger towns.

Gower: Okay then, another question I have. Now you really hadn't lived here in this district very long in 1972.

Sherwood: No, no.

Gower: Your family though had had some roots here.

Sherwood: Yes. And I have an uncle that was in business in Pine River for many years. My cousin still has the business here.

Gower: So your name was known somewhat then.

Sherwood: Yes, the name was known at least locally, right in the Pine River area. Throughout the rest of the district it wasn't. But the name did not hurt me. And one always wonders about that, whether it will or not. When someone's been in business that long--I was happy to find out that it was a good name--that my uncle and cousin through business dealings had not ever been considered wrong or something to that affect. I mean, I'm sure they had problems but at least I never ran into that.

Gower: Then the other-- Third thing was, is, had you been a DFL'er before?

Sherwood: No. No, in fact, I had not been involved in politics before. Of course, partly as a government employee, I couldn't be and my only contacts in the past were--with government at all other than at my job, was to write some letters to my congressmen occasionally and got into some rather serious controversies with Senator Milton Young of North Dakota over Garrison diversion, over the Omega Tower--some of those environmental issues. We are still at odds to this day. But I was not involved and I was asked by the DFL people to run and at the time that was announced--that I was running for DFL--the Republican chairman for the county was on the way out to ask me to run as a Republican. So my political--

Robak: Didn't mean that much.

Sherwood: No. And the reason--my philosophy probably is really more geared to what you would consider Republican Party leanings. But I'm a Democrat.

Gower: Had you ever thought about running for office?

Sherwood: Oh, in a sort of a distant sort of a way. I'd given some thought to it in North Dakota when I lived out there a time or two but never explored it. I certainly didn't give it any thought here the first two years because that was--when the call came in and asked me, I was flabbergasted by it. But I might add, on your question about the DFL persons, even though my leanings are clearly conservative and Republican--and you'll find that among rural Democrats--that there is a distinct leaning towards what you would consider more traditional political positions--I feel strongly about the Democratic Party because in the area of my keenest interest--environment--then the DFL is head and shoulders over the Republican Party and has always been. This is also true on the national level. And so, while philosophically I'm a Republican, in the area of my greatest expertise the Democratic Party has been much better in dealing with environmental problems than the Republican Party has.

Gower: So you had a primary there, you are saying?

Sherwood: Yes, we had a primary in which I ran--there were four of us running and that was before party designation, which came in a couple years after that. So there were four of us running, three of whom were really Republicans, and myself. And the governor threw a lot of support towards me leading up to the primary. But in the primary, (I) came in a distant second--I mean really way back-- So I would run in the finals but I was so far back behind the number one Republican challenger, who was Dutch Cragun, who owns Cragun's Resort in Gull Lake, and he had run the term previous against Bill Walker and had lost by four or five votes on a recount. So

he was really going. In the primary, like I say, he really outdistanced me. So much so that the governor withdrew his support of me; not in big headlines, but that's the last I heard from after the primary. And he found reason not to show up here at a fund raiser and a reception that was planned here in this home just as we got it done and we found out an hour before he was due here that he wasn't coming. So, that's something that had bothered me because I was not familiar with politics and how you go with the winner but you don't stay with the loser and all this kind of stuff. So it left a bad taste right at the beginning, but it did put in me a great determination to go ahead—even without the governor.

Gower: About how many votes were involved there?

Sherwood: In the primary?

Gower: Yeah, compared to you and this Dutch Cragun? How does he spell his name, incidentally?

Sherwood: Yeah. C-R-A-G-U-N. That's Cragun.

Gower: C-R-A-G-U-N, yeah.

Sherwood: Oh, let's see. He--you'd have to go back and check for sure, but it was like at least 600 votes separating us in the primary, which is significant.

Gower: Yeah, that's fine. I just wanted some idea.

Sherwood: --at any rate-- So we went on to the final then and obviously I won, but it was close. I only won by about 200 votes. Had the election occurred a week sooner, I'm sure Cragun would've won.

Gower: How do you account for your win then?

Sherwood: My wife and I doggedly, day after day, knocked on doors every day and every day and every day.

Gower: How did you-- Did you enjoy doing that?

Sherwood: No. I disliked it more and more. In fact, that's the greatest single reason why I won't run again. That door-to-door thing for two months is a-- It's a horrendous waste of time for two months for one thing; and very little is accomplished with it except of course you get elected, but it's such a-- And you expose yourself to a fair amount of abuse, not the least of which are dogs, everywhere you go. And we've both been bitten; my wife rather severely bitten, term before last up at Inger, up in the Indian country. But the public is--aren't the most beautiful to deal with and while you'd have to say the vast majority are good to you when you go to the door, there are those who are abusive and just hard to take if you are sensitive person at all. So--

Gower: If--now you've won three times--

Sherwood: Yes.

Gower: Do you thing you'd have to do that door-to-door?

Sherwood: I don't know. I think so, but I'm not sure, you know. In other words, suppose there is a remote responsibility that my party might decide to take me or draft me on that basis and see. I just flatly refuse to go door-to-door again. Some of the guys make it without doing it; I don't know if we could've here-- Sort of expected you to come around.

Gower: Did you think there were any issues involved there too that might have swung it your way?

Sherwood: No.

Gower: Did you think it was more the door to door thing?

Sherwood: Yeah, the first time it was. There was a single issue, though, that helped the Democratic Party in total, and I'm sure helped me too. And that was the open government issue. Because if you recall, committees and so forth had not been opened to the public up to this time and the Democratic Party, the DFL Party of the state had promised that is they were given a majority, they would open up governmental process to public scrutiny, and they did. They won and they did open it. So that was a key issue in beating the Republicans in the fall of '72. That and, of course, the whole Watergate thing was also up in the air, I think at that time. So between the two--no, that wasn't the Watergate thing; that came the next time around.

Gower: The Watergate thing happened in the summer but then it was completely surfaced then--

Sherwood: Yeah, that was--that's right. So it was the openness of government that was responsible.

Gower: And your position was very much in favor of the openness.

Sherwood: Yes, very much so. It bothered me very much to even realize that we, that I didn't know that we had a closed system. And I could not get very excited and emotional about that--depriving the people of their right to know what's going on by their elected representatives. So, we've made ground on that one. We really did.

Robak: Were there any other issues that you ran strongly for--did you use the issue of the environmental--

Sherwood: A little, a little. Some of the brochures would show that, and I do have a collection of them from each year, but I did run on that, some, but not a major thing, because people up here don't appreciate the environmental struggle. Now down in the cities, where you have St. Cloud, you make hay with that. But up here in rural Minnesota, a lot of people don't go for that--the environmental nuts.

Gower: I could see--you could be unpopular with the environmental--

Sherwood: Yes. It has cost me. My position on the timber wolf has hurt me in my own district for sure and pushing on pollution control, my position on Wild and Scenic Rivers Act has hurt me up here, yeah. So I didn't make a big issue out of the environment, although I was not dishonest about it either. The other thing I kept very quiet about on, although I put it in my brochure, but I never said anything about was my educational--well, the doctor's degree. That would not sell big up here either. And I would say that 99% of my constituents know that I have a doctor's degree.

Gower: They're what--suspicious of a doctor's degree? There's an anti-intellectual thing or what?

Sherwood: Well, yeah, I think so. Although as more and more folks move into this area we are getting a balance on it. So--it's funny because I love these people up here who've lived here down through the years, but I also recognize their biases. We have our own biases, but that's theirs. You don't--they're not high on environmental interference or government control at all. What they do to the land or the resources--they know what's best for this area. With some people, they do. But with the population as a total, I have to say they don't because you can see too many things that have happened.

Gower: Your--what is your wife's background, incidentally?

Sherwood: Well, she's--she was raised in a small, small town in Iowa; Missouri Valley, Iowa, and her father operated a feed mill for many years there. And she has seven brothers and sisters. I met her at Bemidji--north of Bemidji as a matter of fact, because her folks had a place on Big Turtle Lake and we did too. And so we met there and we were married in January of '55. We were both plenty young. She was eighteen and I was twenty. It's not the kind of think that I probably recommend for everybody, but for us it's been beautiful, successful.

Gower: Does she have a college education?

Sherwood: No, she doesn't. She has, let's see--a year or a year and a half of college and has had some opportunities to pick up some stuff. I've talked to her a few times about whether she would want to continue on. I think for a while she did. She felt a certain--you might expect--inadequacy at home. But she's now, she's accomplished a number of things in her own right which I consider exceedingly important, and so her self-esteem over the years has risen to a point where she, I think, feels that she doesn't have to have that, although I'd welcome it if she ever wants to go back.

Gower: And how did she like that campaigning during '72?

Sherwood: She didn't--did not like it. But she went with me. She did a lot of work keeping this place going, campaigning with me and still looking after two boys. But for the first term in office and part of the second term, she despised it, but she stayed, you know, she stuck with it. Her--she has been raised in her own home and spiritually to recognize that she goes with and complies with what her husband wants; and so without complaint she backed me, supported me, but deep down hated it. And it was quite a personal struggle for her until about part way through the

second term when she read Corrie Tenboom's book. And if you're familiar with Corrie Tenboom, she was the lady that was in the concentration camp in Germany. She was a Dutch lady. And she and her sister had been in prison in a Nazi concentration camp. And they had learned to, especially the sister, to praise God in all situations, no matter how horrible they were. And this came through to her after that message; even though she wasn't in a concentration camp, she realized that she had to praise God for the situation. And she did, and the burden lifted immediately. And she had been relieved of that ever since. She was able to wholeheartedly work for me and support me from that time on. And to this day, if we want to go on, if I want to go on, that's fine with her, or if I want to chuck it, that's fine. Both of us, though, agreed that we cannot abide another door-to-door campaign.

Gower: And how did that go, then, in the first term? Did you find that there was quite a bit of education you had to go through, then, down in the legislature?

Sherwood: Yeah, there was. There was a great deal of education for me personally and for the party. They had never had a majority before. So in many cases it wasn't always possible for them to even really tell us what to do or what was expected, even for old hands. So it was almost a nightmare, that first term, especially the first half of it; in understanding the process; and of course the party, in an effort to make a great show, but off way more than we should--almost killed us all down there--in what we undertook in terms of legislation. So that, by the time the session was over in May, we went through a strange thing, you know, and I've never been brainwashed--I don't know what it's like to go through withdrawal--but something strange happened in May. It took about three or four weeks before we realized that we were, that we made an adjustment after that. It was--it was the most horrendous bombardment of the mind that I've ever had, being down there five months and I didn't know what was happening except to

know that we were fatigued most of the time and--hours were way too long. But I didn't realize what a toll it had taken until it was over with and I made the adjustment back in this life.

Robak: Do you ever think, "Geez, what did I ever get into this for?"

Sherwood: Oh, yes. Yeah. I did. The votes were hard on me. You wrestle with the issues and you struggle with the vote and you cast up to 25,000 votes a session and a number of them are major votes. And if you've got any conscience at all, you can't help but be greatly disturbed about votes. And I learned rapidly that all the things I always thought before were black and white, you know, I mean this is right and that's wrong--this is black and that's white--it's simple. You get down there, and there's no black and white--or rarely--all gradations of gray. And that was also difficult then. And you were forced, of course, to hear both sides of an argument, whereas, prior to that time, well you could dismiss an argument if you wanted to. You didn't have to hear it. But there, if you're going to do your job, you have to hear both sides. And then you find yourself, if you're honest, saying, "Hey, you know, that's a point, and maybe they're right." And I find myself changing my mind on issues that I thought I knew the answers on.

Gower: We've got here that you were on Agriculture, Environmental and Natural Resources and Governmental Operations.

Robak: That's probably '74.

Sherwood: That was last term, yes.

Gower: The last term. What committees did you serve on in your first term?

Sherwood: I had Environment and Agriculture and Criminal Justice.

Robak: Were these committees you wanted to serve on?

Sherwood: Yes, in this term I picked up Criminal Justice again and Transportation but dropped Governmental off. I had wanted to try to get a little broader perspective by being on different committees.

Gower: Were you able to--each time--to get pretty much the committee you wanted to?

Sherwood: Yes, pretty well.

Gower: Is this because the DFL was in control?

Sherwood: Yes, that certainly has a lot to do with it. Of course, you have to have seniority before you can get on appropriations or tax committees. I'm not interested in that area, really, even though it's exceedingly important to the state and to many people. Those are committees that are pretty much reserved for guys with seniority so it left fifteen or sixteen other standing committee to select from and I've always got the committees that I wanted out of the others.

Gower: We've interviewed quite a few either present or former legislators and I think I have the impression that most of them, regardless of their party, were able to get pretty much their committee assignments.

Sherwood: I think that's true, and that helps to be able to be a part of the committee that you feel that you can have some input into or you can learn from.

Gower: Now what did you think of the move to party designation for legislative candidates?

Sherwood: Well, I guess I think that-- I think it was probably an honest move. People were-- were really, one or the other anyway, so I guess it was probably a--from the standpoint of the candidate it was an honest move. From the standpoint of the voter, it might make them just a

little bit lazier yet. You know, they say, well there's a DFL, I'm voting for him anyway, see. Rather than trying to evaluate what he might stand for or what his intentions are.

Gower: Now in your particular case, from what you were saying earlier, you might have been just as well off with nonpartisan as with partisan.

Sherwood: Yes. I would have. Personally, I would prefer it that way if there was really such a thing as nonpartisan. But even--but I'm not sure that there is--I wish there was.

Gower: Now when you got down there to the legislature, you were glad to caucus with the DFL, right?

Sherwood: Yes, from the standpoint of my interest. I find myself at odds with the DFL though in a number of areas and crossover and vote with the Republicans on a fair number of issues that come along.

Gower: What's been the party leadership reaction to that?

Sherwood: Well, on the surface, nothing. You don't see it. But there are more subtle ways to deal with you than to be obvious about it. Things happen along the way when you take positions that either are counter-party, one of the most obvious ones that I've been involved in is the Equal Rights Amendment, and it's difficult to explain to the public that I support equal rights and my voting record will prove it, that I support the Indians in my district and the feminists in their needs but not in their foolishness or in their greed and not the Equal Rights Amendment because of the fallout from it. Too involved to get into here. I'm sure. But the point is, I take that stand. It's contrary to my party and then you pay for it. Sooner or later you pay for those stands and the latest time I was one of the candidates for commissioner of DNR because of my background in

Natural Resources. And some of the questions before the commission--this Appointments Commission--came up from the women on the commission force, dealt with what would my hiring practices be. And I indicated that I would be selecting the best qualified person. This was not satisfactory. They wanted that I would be selecting minorities and women and so forth. That cost me--possibly cost me the commissionership of the DNR for the state of Minnesota. And I'll say to you and on tape that I'll match my qualifications with any candidate of the forty that were up for it—and bar none. But, I had made political enemies and that's--if you take your stand on principles, then you pay for it.

Gower: Now, I know in our area there are some legislators who are opposed to the ERA and they state, and I think probably with some justification--I don't know of course, but--that, that's a reflection of their constituents in that particular instance. Now, I would think may be in your case, you could state that too and I think they get along okay with the party because they say, "I'm just voting the way my constituents would want me to vote."

Sherwood: There's difference between voting for an issue and then stepping out and taking a lead on it. And I am the person that introduced the bill to rescind the ERA.

Gower: Oh, I see. Sure.

Sherwood: So there is a difference there.

Gower: Even though I was thinking of, like, say, Senator Ed Schrom who I think has been quite vocal in his opposition to the ERA.

Sherwood: Yes, he has.

Gower: But still I think he gets along fine in the party. I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong on that. I haven't talked to him. See it was a long time ago that we interviewed him.

Sherwood: Well, he's different in that he gets along in a different sense in that--and it's recognized that he's a maverick for example, that he's different, a little funny. So, you know, I don't want to be derogatory at all, but I think there's a feeling among the senators that--well, you know, maybe kind of harmless, so--

Gower: Oh, I see.

Sherwood: But his people don't think so. Obviously he's reelected and people like him and they like his stands and they go down there. And anyway, so there is--at least I see--I think there are some differences there.

Gower: Sure. Now what--when you--did you-- When did you decide to run the second time?

Sherwood: Oh.

Gower: I mean did you have some qualms about the possibility of running a second time?

Sherwood: Yeah, yes I did. I did and I don't remember when I decided that was-- I guess that one came pretty--pretty naturally once I recovered from the second year of the first term. Just kind of flowed into the thing and decided we'd go ahead with it. It was more difficult the second time around, that was when I was, we're getting ready for the third term, made the decision and this time now, I've, with a year and half to go yet, feel very strongly that I will not run. And it is not only because of the campaigning, which is the thing I detest the most about it, but there are some things I guess bother me about the system. And maybe that's in my nature as an idealist. I have been that way and I guess you know when you're an idealist you're always setting yourself

up for disappointments in life. You always expect the best and you expect the systems, on paper, works the way it shows it on paper. And when you hear about the lofty democratic process, then you think that's the way it works, but when you get in there, you find out that no, by George, people are involved again and they can bend anything out of shape; that's rules are made to be manipulated and used by those--by the powerful ones, and to be abided by those who are not so powerful. And I just know that I can't live long enough to change these kinds of things, even though I hasten to add that I am convinced that we still have the finest system in the world and I'm not about to advocate any kind of a change other than--let's adhere to it the way we say we have it. Let's be honest about it. But what happens that--with the exception of, and you can always find exception: individual exceptions and case exceptions; but the general rule is, that unless you are committee chairman, or unless you are party leader--speaker or majority leader--then you really don't have too much to say about what's gonna come out of that thing at the end; what's really gonna be cranked out in terms of legislation. And they decide, really, what bills are gonna make it and which ones aren't. And only a few times along the way does the public get enough input into a process to really make it bend to the public's will; then the system will work, but it takes the public a great deal of education and input on a single issue. In the meantime, there are a hundred other issues that go through, just the way that that small group wants it to go--and there's some give and take there. And I resent that, frankly. And those people would, I'm sure, those and a lot of good people who are in these powerful positions--who believe they are doing what's best for the state, and in many cases, perhaps they are. But it still pollutes the system from the way necessary, to demonstrate how you can bend the system--how bills that aren't wanted end up in a committee that's unfriendly. Or if they do end up in a committee, they somehow get lost. You know, all of a sudden, just, "Wow, well, just don't know what happened

to them.” Or, if you beat on the door long enough, you will finally get a hearing on your bill, but lo and behold, it’s too late to make all your deadlines. And it took me one term just to figure that out... that I was being maneuvered on a particular bill and in order to. I suppose to keep me happy, they finally scheduled a hearing and so forth, but it was too late, see. So with each term you go back, you’ve learned somethings, but unless you are going to be willing to come back term after term until you get the four or five terms under your belt, to the point where you are in a position-- But a lot of good people, and I’ve seen it happen, will drop off before that; some good people stay. But on the other hand, there are some really really bad people that stay and get in those positions and those are people that happen to live in a safe districts where their percentage of one party or the other is so high that they don’t have to worry about being elected, and so--it’s easy. They come back for--you name it--six, eight, ten, twelve terms. So we have both good and bad that happens too. Anyways, I’ve learned a lot in it and because I write, I’ve given some serious thought to trying to articulate these things, maybe some time on paper. I don’t know if I can, because it’s so subtle and I don’t want to go out and sound like sour grapes. And Minnesota has one of the open, most open systems in the nation. I think it does have one of the finest state governments in the country. That doesn’t mean that it couldn’t be better, couldn’t be more fair.

Gower: And even with this openness, though, there’s a small group that controls a lot of it.

Sherwood: Sure. Because they can allow people to come in see the process. But I can’t even put into words about how--how it’s so possible to maneuver the process, to maneuver the people in and to a point where they think they’re doing what they want to do. Maneuvering the public.

Gower: Is it worse now because the DFL has such a huge majority, or would it be that way regardless?

Sherwood: I think it would be that way either way. I don't know that for sure; I can't really say. I think we would be better off if we didn't have such a big majority, but on the other hand, with that big of a majority, we fight among ourselves anyway, which is one way of trying to keep us, keep the process open and honest. You disagree and you tug and pull in there. But I'd still believe it would be better when the balance is tipped, and the balance is gonna come back. The Republicans are gonna make some big gains next year. I'm convinced of that.

Gower: Your presumption is that when the Republicans had the big majority, they were the same way though. Small group controlling the legislature.

Sherwood: I have to believe that when I see that they've kept the government closed for all these years and I see things that weren't done that should've been done. And so I think that the problem would exist either way.

Gower: How did your elections go then in '74 and '75 and '76? Did you get quite a large majority?

Sherwood: No, no. I haven't either time, because I am a controversial person. And I made enemies. And so my margins of victory have been only like 600 votes or so each time.

Gower: Did you run against the same person there or several people?

Sherwood: The second and third term I ran against Doc Mortenson from Menahga both times.

Gower: Is he an M.D. or--?

Sherwood: Yes.

Gower: He's from where?

Sherwood: Menahga in Wadena County. Very formidable campaigner, very intelligent person. Wages a tremendous battle and he knows the issues that I've been controversial on. He exploits them as a good candidate would. And one of the things that has cost me heavily up here was my position in 1973 on behalf of the Indians. Cast a vote which supported the, in a sense, ratification of an agreement worked out between the state of Minnesota and the Leech Lake band of Chippewa Indians up here to give them special hunting, fishing, trapping and ricing rights. And I supported that. And I knew when I did--in fact I made the statement on the floor of the house—"This probably will cost me the election." And that has haunted me all through the northern end of my district: Cass Lake, Walker, all around the lake. Severe--we get--we come under severe attack up at Cass Lake from the white community. And this has been really hard on the white people. In fact we just--we won't even appear at Cass Lake any more.

Gower: You get enough votes elsewhere in the district, though, to offset that.

Sherwood: Yes. And the Indian community, of course, they will pour us some supporters to help offset it, too. But that's going to cost me votes. That is the single most costly thing that I've done down there, as far as votes are concerned.

Robak: You realized that would have an effect.

Sherwood: Yes.

Gower: Who-- Where did that proposal come from?

Sherwood: The Indian one?

Gower: Yes.

Sherwood: Well, that was out of a long thing that began--

Robak: Okay this is side two of the interview. We were discussing the Indian issue and--

Gower: --the emergence of that proposal for the rights for hunting and fishing was it?

Sherwood: Hunting and fishing, trapping, ricing. And the origin of that, of course, from the Indians standpoint goes back to the time when the Leech Lake Reservation was established. And there were a number of treaties back in the 1850s, 40s somewhere in that neighborhood, in which, when the Indians, at some point decided that they could sell some of those tribal lands, they have maintained--they never gave up the fishing, trapping, ricing rights on the reservation, even though a number of the lands were sold to white people. And in at least one court hearing, where I guess it was Judge Devitt here, ruled in their favor. Now, the state of Minnesota wanted to appeal that , but to cross the land we could see that those were, those appeals and so forth were being lost and the Indians were winning virtually everywhere on the basis of the old treaties. So then it was deemed the better part of valor, I guess, for the state to work out an agreement with the Indians, whereby, instead of-- The feeling was that they went through the courts, that we'd end up losing all fishing, hunting, trapping, ricing rights, the white man would. So if we worked out an agreement with the Indian people, then we could continue to hunt and fish there, but there'd be a certain proceed, monetary proceeds would go to the Indians and they would have some special rights up there. So that was agreed to by the judge, and by the state of Minnesota, but they needed legislative approval or ratification if you want to call it that, and that was the vote.

Gower: Were you involved in helping prepare the bill at all?

Sherwood: No, I wasn't. Representative Joe Graba from Wadena was. He was close enough to this area, but because the ninety-some percent of the Leech Lake Reservations in my district that was necessary, really; I had to make a statement on where I stood on the issue. That has followed me, and we knew it would be dangerous and we've ran into some unhappy things at Cass Lake that have been hard to handle for my wife--so that's been a controversial issue. The other, probably major controversial issue of my career has been an attempt to prohibit the use of electronic fish-finders in Minnesota waters for fishing purposes. And that caused a great flap across the state. In fact, for that matter across the nation, because if we had succeeded in passing that bill, the manufacturers of electronic equipment all over the country would be in jeopardy of other states doing the same thing.

Gower: There's a heavy use of this kind of equipment?

Sherwood: It's growing. Yes. We were trying to nip it in the bud. And they're becoming more commonplace. I'm personally convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that's it gonna put our walleye fishery in jeopardy sooner or later. But there again, we ran into an amazing alliance between those who manufacture fishing equipment and outdoor writers and when you have access to the medium through outdoor writers, you can make quite a case against an idiot like Representative Sherwood. And they did. And yet we passed the bill twice in the House two different terms, but we could never get it out of the Senate, but nonetheless we created a great flap and controversy up here in fish country. The average fisherman wants the bill to pass; many resort owners don't want it passed; and most guides don't want it to pass, but they end up with the clout. The average fisherman who sits out in his little boat and fishes...he doesn't have much clout, see. He doesn't get organized. But groups like the Bass Masters and the Muskies, Incorporated—they're organized. And they opposed it. The outdoor writers are organized and

business community is organized. But yet if you get to terms of numbers of people... you could reach them, why we'd win it hands down. You can't do it, but it's the organized minority that wins the fights. Because the unorganized majority, well that's--they're unorganized.

Gower: That's one of the big problems with the use of the initiative and referendum is because it's the organized minority that pulls off all kinds of things. So it really wouldn't work out nearly as well as they thought it would in '78 or something.

Sherwood: No. And I don't know what to do about it. Another classic example that we trouble with each term down there has been the "Ban the Can" bill. There, even every poll that's ever been taken indicates that the public wants that bill passed. We can't get it passed. Organized labor and organized industry is too powerful. And yet, over seventy percent--and that's a mandate--was telling us to pass that bill and we won't do it. That's frustrating. And that's when the public gets disenchanted and you can't blame them.

Gower: How did you like the service in the legislature in your second and third--or you are in your third term--so the first part of your third term?

Sherwood: Well--

Gower: Was it better than the first term because you were more familiar with the--

Sherwood: Yeah. It was better in the sense that I knew what I was doing and what had to be done and I was in better control of the situation. But with each succeeding month I was more aware of the weaknesses of the process--could spot them more quickly--made it frustrating to deal with. So, I guess there was a balance there of being able to know what I was doing and handle it. Of course, by this time I was appointed vice-chairman of the Environment Committee

this term and chairman of the subcommittee on game and fish. So, you know, even as a maverick, sort of, you do move up if you retain a certain credibility with those who are in greater positions. And I have credibility in the environmental area. I'm aware of that, even though I have these other problems with opposing them on other issues that come along--labor issues and so forth.

Gower: How do you get along with the other legislators? Do you like the other legislators?

Sherwood: Yes. Most of them, I do. We have--there's some really great people down there--made some super friends out of them. We have a group that I started back in, I guess the second year of the first term it was--I don't know what you want to call it. We call it a fellowship group, a Bible group or something--a Christian group. I don't care what you call it, but we meet Wednesday mornings at seven o' clock during the session down there.

Gower: Is it all legislators?

Sherwood: Yes, although some staff joins us. And there have never been a lot. We started off with two and this last session we had around ... we usually had fifteen, seventeen, sometimes as many as twenty. And it's been a force to be reckoned with that's developed. And it's probably... my greatest satisfaction has been that group of legislators, because we have been able to meet together, pray together, study the Bible together for a brief hour Wednesday mornings. And then face issues that come up that have moral overtones to them. And I've been successful in stemming some of those that we consider to be a threat to the people of Minnesota. Now, obviously, not everybody agrees with us, but we feel strongly about it and we will be meeting very shortly to develop strategy for next January, because in the past we have had to do all defensive action, constantly trying to block this or amend that. Now we intend to come in with a

positive or an offensive legislative package for a second session. But that has been the high point for my time down here.

Gower: Is this sort of an interdenominational group?

Sherwood: Yes. It has nothing to do with denomination. It's just for people that have--that are sincere and realize that their Maker is real and that their only source of wisdom really comes from there and they seek that kind of help. That's--so it's open to anybody who wants to come on that basis. And it's closed to no one.

Gower: Now, are you--I don't know exactly what you're referring to--are you referring to things like the gay rights bills and things like this? Is this what you're referring to?

Sherwood: Yes. To that. And to pornography. I've had several bills in on that, one of which is languishing in the Senate right now, which would prohibit the showing of obscene films at drive-in theaters.

Gower: This would be a state law, rather than having it on a city or town level.

Sherwood: Yeah. It follows the Supreme Court guidelines, which it has to do. One of the greatest myths in our land that has been repeatedly used to great advantage is that the first amendment to the Constitution prohibits censorship of obscene literature or films but it does not. And the Supreme Court has reiterated that--that the first amendment does not protect obscenity. But it's a fantastic myth that we're having a terrible time educating legislators on. Anyway that's--the Supreme Court has ruled that in 1973 and the states have the opportunity to bring their statutes in compliance with that. Minnesota has not done that, but we hope to. They did finally pass one that only Satan himself certainly could oppose--would be--is the one that prohibits the

showing of obscene films of minors--or of literature and that stuff that is rampant. People--a lot of people aren't aware of it and of course, some people approve of it. Most people aren't aware of it.

Gower: Does this also involve opposition to the abortion reform and so on? Is your group--?

Sherwood: Well, I would say that we haven't taken a position on that as a group. In fact, we don't as a group. As a group we don't come out and say, "Well, the Christian fellowship group says this or that," we don't--

Gower: On anything you don't.

Sherwood: No. I would say that if we were to take that issue, I'd say that we'd probably be 100 percent opposed to abortion. I'm sure we would be.

Gower: Now all of these things--

Sherwood: Except in extenuating circumstances.

Gower: Now all of these things would--you wouldn't be harmed in your district because of your stance on these things, would you?

Sherwood: No. No, that--

Gower: The only controversial things in your district have been essentially in regard to the environment and so on, is that right?

Sherwood: Yeah. And the Indian issue and some on the ERA, believe it or not. Although the first poll I took on the ERA indicated about a third in favor of the ERA, about a third against and a third undecided. And then when I reran the poll last year, there was about 69 percent opposed

to the ERA. It's been a process of education--and that is in our society; the ERA is not going to become the law of the land, even though Minnesota ratified it. The necessary states won't ratify it in time now. I'm convinced of that. And--

Gower: Is your position on the ERA that they already have enough laws to provide equality of opportunity for anybody regardless of their sex?

Sherwood: Yes, and if we don't have it then let's deal with it on a case by case basis or state by state basis. Let's not do it with a mandate from the federal government and the constitution for a couple of really important reasons. One, if we make a mistake, as I'm convinced we would do, it would take about ten years to undo it because of the process of removing a constitutional amendment or getting one. Takes such a long period. Whereas if we pass a law and make a mistake, well, we can amend it or change it next year. It's much more flexible. The other thing about the Equal Rights Amendment that very few people yet are aware of, and that is Article 2 of the amendment. Article 1 is the one that says that you aren't to discriminate on the basis of sex, and that's the one we all hold up and say, "How can you--how can you be opposed to it, you dirty bigot or whatever you are, you prejudiced, you woman hater." That's not the point. The point really rests heavily with the number two which says that enforcement of this rests with federal government, and the original language in Congress said it rests with the federal government and the several states. But they removed, "And the several states" from it. And that just cuts us off. And it would remove from our authority at the state level to deal with any laws that relate to family, home, divorce, alimony, inheritance, you name it. It just goes on and on; and that would all be taken back to the federal government. And I can't believe that there are many people that want to do that. I just can't. But very few people know that. And it's difficult to explain that. So that's my opposition--rests really with giving all that authority back to the

federal government when we've been struggling for years to try to maintain some kind of state's rights.

Gower: But you're not opposed to women having equality of opportunity.

Sherwood: Absolutely not. And my record will show that--votes there--absolutely not. And we have laws that provide it now. Now that doesn't mean that laws aren't broken, nor does it mean that the tradition doesn't die slowly. But we have laws already--many of them. Both federal and states provide that, so--

Robak: I have a few general questions concerning the political system and State legislature. What are your feelings toward a full-time legislature?

Sherwood: I would be opposed to that. It's--we need to clarify that, really, because we're almost that now, if you think in terms of what our obligation is, even when we're out of session. Now the full-time legislature means, say, being in session ten months a year. Well, we're not there yet and I hope we never get there. But on the other hand, we're practically there now. And I don't like it, but the thing is, our obligations don't end May 22nd when the session is over with. People continue to have problems. They call you, they write. Meetings to be attended. So the thing is virtually full-time now. And I don't like it. At this point I would not want to see it even worse than this.

Robak: It's bad enough now--

Sherwood: Yeah.

Robak: Do you feel you can get enough accomplished the way it's set up now, or with an even more limited time?

Sherwood: I hope we can. I think we can. Nonetheless, state government, like federal government, gets more complicated. And maybe the time will come when more time will have to be spent, but I don't know. I hope not.

Gower: What about the pay increase? Did you vote for that?

Sherwood: Yes. Yes, I did. And of course, those of us in the House have to stand for reelection on the basis of that vote; Senate doesn't--bless them. So--but I did because the job is worth it, and whether I run again or not, it just has to be. And I'm sure other fellows have told you that without that pay increase, you do not get a cross section in the legislature--of the public. You get the wealthy or the young. And the people in their most productive years can't afford to be down there.

Gower: Did you--how does--how do you think the, your constituent, have reacted to that? Have you had any feedback on that?

Sherwood: Some. Some of them they don't like it, except the first time the pay bill came up in the previous session I voted against it because of the way in which it came up, you know. It was in that eleventh hour thing it came up. And it was attached onto something else and I voted against it--but it still passed--and the governor vetoed it. But I told people the last time around in any public meeting I was at, any place that question came up, that if the pay bill came up in an orderly procedure and it was reasonable, or seemed reasonable to me, I would be supporting it. So anybody that was really interested knew where I stood before I cast that vote. But I've had a few negative comments on it.

Gower: But it doesn't seem to be very serious.

Sherwood: No, no.

Robak: One other question. The period that you served each term was two years.

Sherwood: Yes.

Robak: Is this the right amount of time, do you feel, or should it be a four year term? Would it be easier, say, to get things accomplished? Would it be easier, rather than going out, campaigning every two years?

Sherwood: I would like to see it a longer term, at least for me personally in fact. As I indicated, one of the drawbacks of taking another term in office is the campaigning, the time involved in that. So, I'd like to see it, but I would say that that's a long way off. The Senate isn't interested in the House getting a four year term, so they're not going to support it unless we give them a six year term. And I don't know--maybe we should, but--

Gower: You don't think there's value in going back to those people every two years and saying, "Now here's what I've done. Will you vote for me or not?"

Sherwood: There is value to that.

Gower: That's the big--that's the best thing about the-- On the other hand it is, as you say, it's a bad process to have to go through every two years.

Sherwood: It is, because so much of your time is spent not really going back to the people and explaining what you did. But rather, going around and handing out brochures and being in county fairs and writing in grades and--

Robak: What you would classify as a waste of time.

Sherwood: Yeah. The fact is that-my experience is that it's a very, very small percentage of the people that really even want to know what did happen down there. They're not interested. They're bored with it. Only an occasional pet issue will come along that will flame their passions--either by the press or one if they're personally involved. The stadium issue, for example; the press really grabbed a hold of that. And it shakes people up, up here.

Gower: The people up here are opposed to the stadium?

Sherwood: Yeah. But the press--they're only human beings too and they write about those things that they can get interest in, not about those things that are really important. They're not going to spend very much time on the school aids bill because it's too complicated, too difficult to understand. It's a nightmare. But those are the things where the money's involved, where the time is spent and where the things that really are going to affect the people of Minnesota--the press can't handle it. So the public always gets a bent view of the legislature through the eyes of the medium. It's a strange process. You know, I've just learned a lot. I wouldn't pass it up for anything--for those four or six years that I've had here because it's been like a whole college education.

Gower: I think it probably isn't even applicable in your case, but time after time I've been asking these legislators if one of the reasons they ran is because they would have--they would gain some power or some prestige or both in being a legislator. And, well I'll ask that too then.

Sherwood: No, no. It's not. And the truth is, there's very little of that anyway. I mean, even once you get in, even if you thought there was, there isn't. The public holds you in such low esteem, by and large, that there isn't much of that. You know, I suppose that most legislators--and I honestly would say that, well, they probably like the thoughts that there may be some prestige

with it. But, if they're further honest about it, they will recognize that whatever prestige they get from it is often just because of something somebody wants from them anyway. So the only honest prestige that they can get from it is trying to really serve their people well. So, you know, neither that nor money was involved.

Gower: And there's a low esteem of the legislators?

Sherwood: Yeah, among the public. And it's a funny thing too because if you talk to--if you talk to people--you know, if I go out and visit with people, you can tell that on one hand, some of them are kind of--I'll say awed by it. That's a bad word--but kind of you know. On the other hand in that sense, maybe there is something that goes way back to the roots that "These are your elected representative; they are your government and they're acting on your behalf," and maybe there's something there way down inside. On the other hand, the abuse that is heaped upon the legislators collectively far outweighs that. So it's a strange mixture of both being kind of respectful, polite and awed on one hand versus this derogatory derision--"dumb idiots spending all our money," and all that stuff. So you get both and I don't know where it's at, really. But the general feeling of politicians is just that; if you get called a politician, it's derogatory, even though the dictionary won't tell you that--

Robak: So overall, there's good and bad to the job.

Sherwood: Yes.

Robak: Do you enjoy the job at all?

Sherwood: Well, yes, I enjoy it because of the people I met, both along the way in my district and down there--would never have had the opportunity. I've enjoyed it for what I've learned,

both the good and the bad, the insights that it's given me. I've enjoyed it for what I've been able to accomplish--and there have been some things. And of course I've taken some defeats too. And I believe that I have, through my votes, have served my people honestly. Maybe not always well in their mind, but always honestly. I can never be accused of not being honest with my people, letting them know precisely where I stand, what I intend to try to do. So it's been, overall it's been a positive experience even though many of the things I've expressed to you today have been kind of a negative sort. So I don't want to really leave that with you, that it's only--it's been a good experience. It's something that I wish everybody could experience.

Robak: Certainly a learning experience in your case.

Sherwood: Oh, yes, tremendously.

Robak: What about your future, Glen?

Sherwood: Well, I don't know. That's up in the air. I do some part-time real estate work here. I may get back into writing. And I will begin to pursue other options as the year progresses. I've got a year and a half left, so we'll just have to see.

Gower: You were saying something about a field editorship or--is that what the title was?

Sherwood: Yes. It's for Audubon.

Gower: Now, would that--you could live here and have that position?

Sherwood: Yes. That--would handle assignments for Audubon in a multi-state area. Now that's not available to me now, but it was available prior to the--to getting into politics.

Gower: That way you could remain here, though, but then do your writing and your other things

Sherwood: Yes. And that's the kind of thing I'd like to do. We obviously we love it here. We've got a very strong feeling about this part of Minnesota and there's no place that I'd rather be than right here.

Robak: Okay. I think that does it as far as questions. Thank you very much.

Sherwood: Yes. You're welcome.

Robak: Conclude this interview.