

February 20, 1975

SENATOR SYAS: No, it was just a statement of our thinking. It's not binding on any future Legislature.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you Senator Syas.

SENATOR SYAS: It was just something that we felt . . . it was just a suggestion.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you Senator Syas.

SENATOR SYAS: Yes, I know you can't bind a future Legislature.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you Senator Syas. Members of the Legislature, if in order to justify the passage of a bill it's necessary to try to tell future Legislatures now they ought to proceed with caution, perhaps the thing to do is to put safeguards in the bill itself. So that this Legislature which feels the bill is justified in passage, assumes total responsibility for all of the safeguards and all of the conditions that ought to be attached to that bill. This could be a vehicle for a worthwhile project. On the other hand, I see it as allowing great abuses if proper safeguards are not built into it. The Centrim Project that I was talking about, I personally believe, is an example that could fit within what this bill would permit. The city declares the area blighted, it condemns it, it incurs indebtedness of all citizens initially to go ahead and take this property and condemn it and clear it. Then you hope that enough revenue is generated to retire the bonds. Should the revenue not be generated, I don't know how the bonds would be retired. There are general obligation bonds and revenue bonds, and there are statutes which tell how these bonds are to be handled. If all of the provisions in statute would apply to any bonds that were issued under this provision, perhaps those are safeguards as far as the retiring of bonds. But the concern I have, and it's genuine, is strong forces in a city exerting the political clout to cause a village board or city council to take property which large business interests cannot obtain by negotiation or legitimate methods that exist under the statutes now. This would empower them to have the council, or whatever governing body it is, to declare the area blighted. To take public money and clear that land, then make it available to the big interests who could not obtain it otherwise. The big interests would not even have to clear the land. So if we take the Centrim as an example, all those little shoe stores over there and the little people who all of a sudden don't count . . . although when children are being taught to pledge allegiance to the flag, to stand up for the National Anthem, or told that these little people built this country. When the big men decide that they want it, then these little people no longer count. If safeguards can be put into this to avoid something like that, Senator Cavanaugh, I would not be opposed to the bill. But as it stands, it makes possible a naked grab of power, like the Rockefeller's did originally, and the country is suffering for now. Those are my concerns, if you can deal with those then you don't have any opposition from me.