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LB 273

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Jensen, on the committee amendments to LB 273.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, I appreciate Senator Schrock in looking for alternative crops for Nebraska farmers. I think we should do that. I think the Agricultural (sic--Agriculture) Department and Agriculture Committee should always do that. I can recall a few years ago while deer hunting in western Nebraska I came upon a crop that...came upon a crop that I was not familiar with and, as a matter of fact, I'd really never seen grown before, and I asked the rancher, I said, what is this I'm walking across out here? And he said, that's Jerusalem artichokes, and there were some farmers here in Nebraska that, because they were looking at an alternative crop, started growing Jerusalem artichokes and it was supposed to be for cattle feed, his cattle and also other feed products. He said that after his cattle had a chance to eat the good hay in the meadows and whatnot, they wanted nothing to do with the Jerusalem artichokes. And I often wondered how many dollars this individual lost by planting this crop, irrigating it and there wasn't any market. One thing I learned when I was back in the building business was you...you don't necessarily grow what you want to grow. You don't build what you want to do. You build...you have to first find out if there's a market for such a crop. Well, first of all, there is very, very little market for hemp. Matter of fact, it's my understanding that you could grow all of the nation's need for hemp in around 2,000 acres. And I do know that there are other states that are looking at this issue. Some are doing a study on it. Some are actually involved in it. But, first of all, is there a market? Should we even be looking at this? And certainly we have a free enterprise system, you can do anything you want, but I, if I was to grow any crop, if I was to build anything, if I was to be in any kind of a business I would first want a market for it. I don't see that happening. Before I came to the Legislature, before I ever ran for any political office, I was involved with a group in Omaha called PRIDE--Parent Resources In Drug Education--and I became involved in that because I saw young people getting involved in drugs, alcohol, and saw what that was doing to their lives, to the