

(start belt #5)

Now the statement of intent is on your desk and I would invite you to read it with me. (read statement of intent) Now, I want to comment while I am on my feet a little bit as to what is happening here. All of us are aware of what is happening in Nebraska. I just checked this morning and there are now 31,628 registered wells in the state of Nebraska, irrigation wells. Again this year over 2,000 new wells were installed. We do know that we have gone from irrigating about three million acres several years ago to irrigating over five million acres now. Our state water plan that came before us two years ago, told us that we possibly can be irrigating as much as nineteen million acres. That was...or...that would more than triple the amount of acres that is being irrigated today. As a result of this tremendous development it is quite certain as we learn through the interim study that there are areas in the state and particularly four of them where there is over development. Now the question before us is, have we reached the place in Nebraska where we need to do as other states have done and that is to have a look at what is happening and try to regulate the development of these wells. Now we need to talk just a little a bit about food and what food means to the world today. More and more we are reading comments in newspapers and magazines that we are heading for a crisis in obtaining enough food and growing enough food for the needs of not only the world but in particular for our nation. This is why agriculture is getting high priority in the use of energies and fuels. Now lets have a look at what is possible in the state of Nebraska. The state of Nebraska is one of the few states if not the only state that still does have an adequate supply of water to take care of our needs. But the time is coming very soon when we are going to have to look at a way of recharging our underground water. That is several years away but in the mean time I personally believe, and I am sure that Senator Lewis and I value his comments will agree on this, that the time has come and we need to do everything that we can to be very careful on how we move. I think that this is necessary that we lay this before the public. I'm sure that we will get a lot of feedback, but I am hopeful that you will not treat this bill like you did the other one and allow its introduction and lets see what the people of Nebraska have to say about it. I would invite Senator Lewis who chaired the subcommittee on the study to make a comment if he cares to do so. I know that I have taken some time, but I know this is very important.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Richard Lewis. Stand by just a minute.

SENATOR RICHARD LEWIS: Mr. President and members of the body, I would be happy to respond to Senator Kremers invitation to speak about this. As he explained, I was chairman of this subcommittee, we held hearings at several different points in the state and I am happy to report that the people are concerned and I don't like to participate in legislation that is counter to the wishes of the people, but as we held these hearings out in the areas that are most actively engaged in the irrigation business and where the development of wells is the most rapid, and these people are concerned, not only the people who own the land and the wells but also the business people in these communities. This irrigation is a vital part of their economy there. There, their whole hearted accord generally with some type of water management program and this is not a hastily drawn bill