

February 1, 1974

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, Senator Proud has made reference to politicians and others have talked about political speeches. Anything that is said in this body at a time like this can be construed in that light. I assure you that what I am saying now is said in sincerity. Yesterday I didn't get into the discussion because it looked like something was going to be done in this area that would be beneficial to old people, now they are being converted into a political football. I doubt that anybody in this body, if they could look at an old person, who is in need would say some of the things before that person which has been said here today out of the present. When we talk about a bill which is dealing with a group of people who need help, in our minds we should draw a mental picture of those people and that will temper and modify a lot of the statements that we might make in jest. If we jest about each other and each others motives that is one thing because that individual is here to answer for himself as he chooses to do so, but when the ERA came along I was in favor of that because in my mind and according to my understanding, it would lend a stature and dignity to women in this country which they do not currently enjoy as far as certain aspects of the law are concerned. On the area of health and assistance for children, any bill that would prevent child abuse whether it was in public schools, in institutions or in private homes at the hands of parents, I was in favor of that because I want to see children protected against all people, whether they are well intentioned or not and the things they do that hurt children. In this situation, we are talking about older people. If all of us live long enough, we are going to be old. They who are out there now and old in a sense are voiceless. Some of them may not vote, some of them may be considered excess baggage and useless to a lot of people, but they still are human beings, they have rights, they have feelings, by the laws and constitutions, there are certain privileges that they are to enjoy. But I think that they begin to be taken for granted because they are not here, they are not making a lot of noise, they can not lobby unless like on one day when somebody happens to bring them here. I think that if Senator Proud is serious in his motion to amend this bill to say that they be allowed to ride for no fare at all, I would be in favor of that if it was given in sincerity, but I think that it is not. We are trying to do something which is possible this morning. I think that it is possible to get through this Legislature, a bill that would reduce the fare for older people, but I am not sure that it would be possible to get through the Legislature a bill that would take away the fare all together. So when you vote on Senator Proud's motion, if you want to kill the bill let's not do this bill that way by subterfuge by putting on an amendment that we are not going to support. If enough votes are given to make his amendment a part of the bill, those votes should stick and pass the bill. If you are not going to vote to pass the bill with that amendment, then I think that it ought to be voted down. What I hope that we will do is look at this in terms of the people who are to be effected by it. As far as cost, I think that Senator Fellman said it very, very well. I think Senator Mahoney used the right word when he applied the term Scrooge to those who were talking about cost in a situation like this because the cost is infinitesimally small when compared to other programs and when we think that the amount of good that can be purchased for such a small price. As for fiscal note, when you have things going from day to day like a transit authority, you don't know how many people are going to ride the bus, you have no way of determining what the cost of anything is. If there is a sale downtown today that might draw a lot of older people, the buses might be full of them. The rest of the days of the year there might not be any old people riding the bus at all. So I think that the cost would be indeterminate at this point but that is not the primary consideration. Here is what I will say in conclusion. Senator Proud, Senator Proud may