

SENATOR DWORAK: Mr. President and colleagues, this amendment changes the distribution, or the percentage of distribution between the local subdivisions of government, state government and the railroads. The railroads are now contributing a certain percentage of money, namely ten percent, and this would change the railroad's contribution from ten percent to seventeen percent. It would reduce the state's contribution by a like amount, seven percent. Now I'm appalled at what the railroad people told me about what they felt their responsibilities were as far as these safety crossings. They indicated to me that it made no difference to them economically whether a railroad crossing was safe or unsafe, and that probably, in fact, is true, but I do think that the railroads do have a responsibility, even though it doesn't affect their economy one way or another as to whether people can cross railroad tracks safely or not. This is a problem that I've been appalled about, I think, for as long as I've been consciously aware of all the tragedies that occur at railroad crossings. There is hardly a week or a month goes by that we do not have some type of carnage at railroad crossings, and that needs to be stopped and curtailed. Now I think the state and the local government rightfully do have a responsibility, but I also think the railroads as well have a responsibility and I would think they would have a growing responsibility with the growing rail traffic.

PRESIDENT: The noise level is so much that would we please try to hold it down to a dull roar at least so that somebody can hear. Proceed, Senator Dworak.

SENATOR DWORAK: Thank you. I think as the state and local governments have a responsibility, so do the railroads have a responsibility in safety at railroad crossings. The community I live in, Columbus, is on a main line of the Union Pacific, and we're acutely aware of the number of accidents and deaths that occur each year at railroad crossings. Now, with the increased coal traffic I think that responsibility of railroads should increase, and that's essentially what this amendment does is increase the railroad's responsibility seven percent. Now, I'm not opposed to railroads. I don't dislike railroads. I'm not upset that railroads are profitable. Railroads serve a good legitimate function to the people of the State of Nebraska, and I think strong railroads are important, but I also think along with that responsibility, and along with that increased rail traffic, along with those increased profits comes increased responsibility. I think they have an obligation to the people. I don't see this as crippling. I don't see this as a detriment to getting