

March 27, 1979

LB 460

Fowler and Senator Simon agree with that. The bill is more or less a statement of policy from the standpoint of this Legislature that where possible we should try to recognize the serious problems that face many of our people. I think that I am torn between two sides. I do not agree with the idea that Senator Simon has put forth that says you should have a lifeline rate. On the other hand, I think it is time that we do point out that there is a point beyond which an individual cannot pay the cost of energy any longer. It is unfortunate indeed that we are singling out the utility companies, the electrical companies, who are at the mercy of the oil companies and the coal companies. Most of the cost of the generation of electricity is because of the exorbitant cost of oil and coal and we have done nothing and we are doing nothing to cut those costs down. The costs of electricity are tied directly to those costs. We are trying to put a lid on the pressure cooker without turning down the fire and it is almost impossible to do. I suggest to you that if you vote for the kill motion you have said, in effect, we don't think that is the right solution. On the other hand, if you vote against the kill motion you are saying, Senator Simon, we commend you for trying to point out the exorbitant cost of energy but we don't think you can do that either then that way. I know that there are people of good faith on both sides and I think that at this time, Senator Simon, you have probably drawn more attention to the high cost of energy than anyone has done during this legislative session. I only wish that your bill had come up yesterday prior to the discussion on 571 because it would have highlighted what we are trying to do. The people who use electrical energy have no alternative and I think that is what Senator Simon is trying to say. They have to use that high cost electricity because that is the only thing available to them. At the same time the utility companies who generate that electricity have no other recourse other than to pay the cost of the oil and the coal that generates it. Then the question is, why do we find ourselves in a situation in which we are in today and that is because this nation does not have an energy policy. There is no energy policy as such and I would have to say, as Senator Fowler pointed out, it is the guy in the middle who picks up the tab. There is always going to be someone who can figure a way around it and if he just can't pay it, we are going to find someone who will pay it but the average guy who gets up in the morning and goes to work and does his job and pays his bill is going to get stuck.