

April 12, 1979

LB 542

today are at such a level that it is far more economical to utilize aircraft when traveling across the state than it is to tie up two or three days of a very expensive individual's time, and I can recall a specific instance when the Ag Committee used an airplane to attend a series of hearings across the state, and we were gone a total of one day, but the supporting people who attended those hearings were gone as much as three days, because they drove all the way to Scottsbluff and up to Chadron and back through Valentine, back to Lincoln. I think when you realize the probable cost involved in time and equipment, plus the fact that the automobiles are not cheap any more either, and automobile travel is no longer cheap, that we need to look at the necessity. It's kind of interesting that this amendment would come up this morning because I do have an amendment for 589 that calls for replacement of the State Patrol helicopter. That equipment, by the way, is ten years old. I don't think there are any ten year old automobiles in the State Patrol, and I think it's asking too much of competent people to use a piece of equipment that's always used under emergency conditions that's ten years old and maybe subject to failure at a critical time and endanger the lives of excellent personnel, and endanger also the mission that it was supposed to accomplish. We know that some people regard aircraft as frivolous, and aircraft the past few years have been kind of a whipping boy in this state, and an aircraft that was owned by the State of Nebraska had the unfortunate accident of winding up in the Platte River and caused some bad press, and then wound up being put on the auction block for half of what it was worth in an effort to prove that we can be economical. I think that we are able and capable of making those decisions here in this body, and I certainly am not an expert in all areas, I'm not an expert in the aircraft business, but I recognize that there comes a time when maintenance exceeds the value that is placed into it and it becomes imperative to trade equipment, and the manner in which the budget committee has proposed to make those funds available is a reasonable one. It's far more reasonable than for us to employ the use of charter aircraft perhaps when our own equipment is not available. It's a reasonable system. It's one which is efficient, and one which I think has been well thoughtout, and...

PRESIDENT: One minute, Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: ...and certainly has my support. And while I do not often disagree with Senator Lewis, I find that in