

January 31, 1980

LB 499

involved. I just urge the adoption of this amendment.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Murphy.

SENATOR MURPHY: Well, I would address myself to supporting certainly the intent of Senator Vickers' motion because we have before us another one of those situations where if you have got something you can't get your own people to endorse and support, then get a select group together and go put the pressure on the state. They have got the money. Now this thing is being advocated on the basis that we are going to collect this tax from a bunch of tourists going through Nebraska, and I want to know how much of Lincoln's hotel and motel capacity is occupied by tourists on every Friday in the fall. In the last month who has occupied the hotels in Lincoln? Tourists? No, NRDs, fair boards, numerous associations, down to see you people and you are going to impose a tax on them in order to make Lincoln more attractive. Now I think the thing that we probably are not giving proper consideration is the fact that we presently have a department of tourism in the Department of Economic Development, and do you know how much money...do you know how much money belonging to the taxpayers of the state has already been dedicated to that department? Four hundred and ninety thousand dollars. Now if that isn't enough money to get the job done, then I would say we need some effectiveness in our department. But I think most importantly, the hotel and motel operators have their own state association. For years...for years those people could not agree among themselves to levy a per capita tax or room assessment, if you will, to establish this fund and do these things. They want it done but their own association can't agree on doing it. So what do they do, go down and put the arm on the Legislature. They don't really know what they are doing anyhow. We might just as well get in on some of the money they are spilling, and if we can bring enough pressure to bear from the big cities, not just Omaha and Lincoln, but all of them along the interstate, we can get the job done. That way we motel operators not satisfied with the half million dollars the state is spending on us now will shame, embarrass, cajole and again mislead...tell them we are going to get the tourists, we are not going to get Nebraskans, we are going to get the tourists, and I will guarantee you the overwhelming percentage of room occupancy in this state are Nebraska residents, not tourists. I think Senator Vickers is entirely right. If they want an assessment, which they could make, the room rent would be no different whatsoever, whether we put it on as a tax or they put it on as a room charge. They will be in the same net

6644