

February 22, 1980

LB 802

I rise in support of this bill. For many years those of us who lived close to or on the Missouri River have certainly visualized a tremendous impact that the better usage of that water that goes by our door annually would be of extreme benefit to Nebraska. At the present time there is a feasibility study being done by the bureau to see if there is a reasonable approach to taking some of that water from the Missouri River to areas that at various times, find themselves lacking the rainfall from the skies for agricultural purposes. In addition to that there are various communities in southeast Nebraska that do not have the availability of water for domestic use and they are also looking at a possibility that some of this water that goes by our door can be used for the benefit of Nebraskans. We are told that there is 40,000,000 acre feet that go by annually down the Missouri River to the Gulf of Mexico which Nebraska does not use at all. We are also told that less than a third of that amount would be essential to the transportation of barges and so forth so that at least some withdrawal or some use of that water that we are not now using could be made without a detriment to the river traffic as we now know it. It appears to me that there may very well be in the future a chance that someone, somewhere may make an attempt to take that water out of the Missouri across country to some other areas and if we are not protecting ourselves as this bill, as I understand, will give us our foot in the door at least for the use of that water, we may never have that opportunity. I certainly commend Senator Wagner in his efforts and he certainly is looking to the benefit of Nebraska down the road. I urge you to support this bill, to clarify the language and make it very worthwhile. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR NICHOL PRESIDING

SENATOR NICHOL: Senator Keyes, did you wish to speak to this?

SENATOR KEYES: I, too, Senator Cal Carsten, I am going to support this bill. I am a little concerned how the State of Nebraska can make the Missouri River property of the public and I presume that that would be on the other side, that the Iowans will make a...I don't think we can tell the Iowans that their side of the river shall be public property. I hope that when southeast Nebraska who also are looking for barges will understand that the City of Omaha takes water out of the river and returns it to the river. They are talking about taking water out and returning it to the land and I don't know whether it reaches the river or not but the legislation is going to have to come that will do that. We do need water in southeast Nebraska.