

March 12, 1980

LB 918

I would like to be able to support the Fowler amendment but I really don't think that I can and I will tell you why. I believe that it is important for us at this point in time to commit to a certain portion of the cost and then if when the budget bills come forward, we decide that we want to limit the dollar amount, then it is up to the Department of Agriculture to decide those areas which are most in need of being sprayed for grasshopper control and they can make that decision at the time that they have to enter into those contracts but I am afraid that at the present time Senator Fowler's amendment really doesn't say very much because we know that the rancher must pay at least one third and it would be a departmental decision if it were to be more than that. I know that the Budget Committee has intent language in the budget bill which would limit the amount of participation by the Legislature to one sixth. It may very well be that that is all the money we are going to expend and it may be as Senator Clark has pointed out that it is more than we need but I believe that we should give the department the responsibility to write the program based upon the guidelines they have laid down. I don't think they are going to waste the money. I certainly am not in a position at this time to tell you how much of a need there is going to be. It is going to depend upon many conditions but if those conditions worsen and the economic conditions in those areas of the ranch country become such that livestock numbers are affected, then as soon as the thing comes back down through the pipeline, all of us will again be affected. It is a little bit like flood control in eastern Nebraska. It is a little bit like some of the other programs we vote for from time to time that have no pertinent application in our own area. It is a matter of size. It is a matter of scope and as Senator Kahle pointed out, unless you have been out there and seen the size and the nature of the problem it is difficult to assess. Our University of Nebraska Extension Department provides many services to all residents of the State of Nebraska on a first come, first served basis. Some of us benefit tremendously and some benefit less. The Natural Resource Districts have a multitude of programs, not all of which affect us all equally. This is one of those situations where the rancher needs the assistance of the department. The department is able and willing to assist them and I would hope that we would give them the flexibility that they need. I do not think, Senator Dworak, that we have surrendered the appropriation process by doing so. That is still with us and there is nothing that can be mandated to this Legislature to come back and spend more money or appropriated more money and a deficit appropriation if they go beyond the appropriated funds of the Legislature.

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