

April 1, 1980

LB 789

Well, Senator Warner says we all know the poor people are so doggone poor they don't have any entertainment, so for that reason we ought not to use the Consumer Price Index. Furthermore, says Senator Warner, the Consumer Price Index is bad measure because also included in that market basket are home prices. Again, we know the poor people are so darn poor they can't be buying any homes so we ought not to use the Consumer Price Index in terms of measuring necessary increases in ADC allowances. Now I know that Senator Warner's mind works far better than those statements, and I suspect that those statements have come from the Nebraska Department of Public Welfare that are at this juncture attempting to sandbag a very needed bill. LB 789 is based on the premise that the Consumer Price Index has increased by 17 percent from the time ADC increases were last increased to July 1st, 1979. When I contacted the Director of the Department of Public Welfare about a half a year ago and asked him what an appropriate ADC increase would be, he gave me two figures. He gave me the figures that are in LB 789 and he gave me a higher set, and he said the higher set should be used considering the fact that if an ADC increase measure passed it would not be effective until 90 days after adjournment, and by that time we could reasonably expect the Consumer Price Index not to have increased by the 17 percent but instead by 30 percent. Well, I know that when Senator Chambers and Senator Goodrich introduced LB 789 they chose the lower figures. So let me tell you, the bill is already off the money. Without any question, the Department of Public Welfare has taken some existing payment figures, has applied them to existing property guidelines, and has shown that somehow total payments in the ADC program are greater than the property guideline. Now I, personally, have examined their figures and think that the Department of Public Welfare is engaged in one of the greatest cases of sophistry this state has seen in a long time, the kind of sophistry that those that are charged with caring for our needy ought not to do. It is wrong. It is incorrect. In my opinion, it is almost immoral. But so be it if that is what they want to do. It is their prerogative, but it is certainly our prerogative to reject the kind of rationalizations for a point that they attempt to make. For example, what do they do? They include the average medical payment as a payment to all children and all families in determining whether or not the state actually is giving enough children and families...giving children and families enough money to bring them above the poverty guideline, or as Senator Marsh has ably pointed out not every person incurs a medical expense. Because not every person incurs