

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I just had a chance to look at the bill for the first time today also, but I sure have a lot of questions about it and I would like to direct some of those questions to Senator Newell at this time if I may because I think some of them are very important questions. First of all, as I understand the bill, we are talking about arson investigators but the powers that they are given are not limited even. I mean assuming for the moment that you wanted to give them police powers, those police powers are not limited to arson investigations and if they see somebody, I suppose violating traffic laws or if they see a robbery in progress, these are police officers that can pull out their weapons and deal with it under this bill. Is that not correct?

SENATOR NEWELL: Senator Beutler, the situation is simply this. We are authorizing these four officers in the Omaha area to have the same powers as police officers. Now as you well know, police officers have the authority to carry weapons both on duty and off duty and so forth. Now, in fact, Department SOP is not going to allow them and is not going to authorize them to be involved in anything other than the natural investigation of fires but if you....

SENATOR BEUTLER: Is there any reason why police officers could not investigate fires? I mean if you want police officers to investigate fires, can't we just assign a couple of people in the Police Department to investigate fires?

SENATOR NEWELL: All right, Senator Beutler, here is the situation and I am sure you are aware that....

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Newell, thank you, your answer is going to be too long. I will get the answers from you at another time. I would like to point out a few more problems with the bill. First of all, it is too broadly drawn in my opinion with regard to the police powers that are being given to them. Secondly, Senator Chambers has already pointed out that they have a subpoena power. I don't think regular police officers have that kind of power, so not only are you giving them police officer power, but you are making them super policemen in a way without the protections that we have found historically that should be applicable to all police officers regardless of the type of investigation that they are doing. There is a perjury provision in here having to do with someone who knowingly gives false testimony material to an issue or a point in question while under oath or affirmation in any hearing conducted under this act. Well, I am