

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Senator Nichol.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Madam Chairman, members of the Legislature, Senator Beutler, I would like to ask you one other question. There has been a push the last few years to have one strata of judges, in other words, combining county and district judges into one judgeship so that they are all the same. Are you acquainted with what I am talking about?

SENATOR BEUTLER: I think the Supreme Court has indicated an interest in a one-tier court system at least for outstate.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Yes, that was the term I was groping for, one-tier court system. Is this an attempt in any way to bring this about?

SENATOR BEUTLER: This bill is imposed upon us by the federal government, and in my opinion, it is not an attempt by the Supreme Court to do that. However, one of the provisions of the bill has that effect, and that provision of the bill is the provision that allows the Supreme Court to appoint county judges who do not now have jurisdiction over domestic matters to deal with child support and alimony, and it gives them that authority for the reason that if we don't do that then the federal government will not approve the system we have set up and we need to do that to insure that these matters are handled in an expeditious manner so that a lawyer in Red Willow County doesn't have to wait for the judge, the district judge, to come three weeks later. He can use the county judge who is right there in the county this week and get expedited action. That is the theory, Senator Nichol.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Is that saying that county judges can be county judges as well as referees? They can be both.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Yes, the federal government has insisted upon a semantics game here and they have rules and regulations that say that judges cannot do these things but they have given us permission to use our county judges to do these matters as well as our district judges. If we say that they are putting on a different hat, they are going to put on their referee hat and be referees when they do this, not judges, but nonetheless it will be the same people.

SPEAKER NICHOL: The county judges are elected and the