

I do believe that this projected reduction would not begin to take effect, obviously, planned for ahead of that, but would not begin to take effect until February 1. But I think probably, as the bill stands, under the circumstances, this reduction might be justified better than some of the other alternatives that we looked at.

SENATOR CARSTEN PRESIDING

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you. Senator Vard Johnson, please.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, the question that Senator Wesely poses to us today is whether or not the Department of Social Services should suffer from a budget reduction. It is a significant budget reduction because as we reduce state funds we reduce a much larger amount of federal funds. And the budget reduction would result in the elimination of at least 38 different staff positions, or the closing of 46 different offices in 46 different counties, or reduction of group homes for foster children in the NCCY program. It is again a reduction that in better times we probably would not make.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Excuse me, Senator Johnson. (Gavel.) It is getting quite noisy in here and a little bit difficult to hear even up here. Let's try to keep our conversation down if we can, please. You may continue, Senator Johnson. I'm sorry.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: In better times we would not make this reduction. These are not better times. These are troubled, difficult times. One of the things that has intrigued me about this proposed reduction is the fact that a number of part-time service offices in rural Nebraska will be closed. The question is, should some part-time offices in rural Nebraska be closed, particularly with the farmers and the ranchers and the towns people having considerable difficulty? I am personally convinced that as we watch the agonies of our rural neighbors, as we watch the reduction of the agricultural economy in our state, and the allied small town economy in our state, and the movement of men and women from small towns into urban centers, and the movement of men and women off of the farms and the ranches, that the kind of infrastructure that we have developed for a more populated time, for a time that had a more robust agricultural economy, that that infrastructure itself has to be changed. The infrastructure must be an infrastructure which is essentially compatible with the lowered population base and the