

SENATOR SMITH: I would like to speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Okay. Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Madam President and members of the body, I rise to oppose Senator Nelson's amendment and I know she is offering it in good faith. I visited with her many times and I also appeared at the committee hearing when she was presenting her bill. But I don't think this is a right way to do it. If something don't work, do we just do away with it? I don't think that's the way we should do it. When we get through with Senator Nelson's amendment, and I hope you defeat it, I have an amendment that would retain \$15,000 a year in this program, 15,000 is all, Senator Nelson, and I think we can do a good job with the 15,000. Senator Nelson would take the \$70,000 out, but the program she talked about like the ones with the doctors and the rural nurses and the others, this money wouldn't go for that, would it? I don't think it would. No, she's shaking her head no, but keep in mind when we debate this amendment the purpose of this leadership academy, it was created for youth who show leadership abilities but who may not otherwise be academically gifted. So we're taking these from the bottom half of the class, so to say. And it gives students who are at risk or who are not in traditional leadership positions a chance to learn about leadership and to focus on the development of those skills and I had two youths from the 19th Legislative District at this academy in Grand Island last year and they thought that they got a lot of good out of it. Now I agree there are a lot of leadership programs for those gifted students, but I feel that there is a void for the students who are not at the top of the class, but who still show a lot of abilities which need to be developed. The youth leadership academy offers them this rare opportunity. I cannot deny that the academy held last year was a financial fiasco, it was. Senator Nelson, I agree, but there again we in the Legislature probably should have kept our thumbs on it, and I realize it was ran by our research division and we...well, we've had some problems there. I'll have to admit that. But I believe it is wrong to throw out the whole program and I believe with a little more guidance from the Exec Board it could be a success with a lot less dollars. I think last year we spent around \$100,000 and I agree that's a lot of money, but I think we can do better. My amendment that I have coming up is for \$15,000. I believe, well I know, the Legislature will be able to house and feed 100 students for one week because I've checked into some other programs. I checked