

March 20, 1979

LB 507, 508

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, I take this action this morning with some regret because I do realize that the time of the Legislature is very important and I recognize also that resting in committee at this time is a similar bill, LB 507, which the committee could use to do the very same work that I designed 508 for but the reason that I offer the motion this morning is because I believe it is very important that we discuss on this floor some of the problems that affect the State of Nebraska and which I believe are the responsibility of this Legislature to address. You will recall that for the past four or five years the committee on Agriculture and Environment has been called upon annually to hold public hearings relative to the boxcar shortage that continually causes problems for the movement of grain throughout the State of Nebraska. It became apparent to the committee after numerous hearings in all parts of the state that the boxcar shortage was not just simply one of a shortage of boxcars but rather an overall shortage of updated equipment to handle boxcars, to handle the new hopper cars in a proper manner. For example, the new hopper cars that the railroads find most convenient to move large quantities of grain from port to port are too large for many of the branch lines that are in existence today in some of the small country elevators and in fact some of those country elevators are not so small. They are of substantial size but they are still located on branch lines and those branch lines were built many many years ago and if you have watched the newspapers and the radio the past few years you will note that almost every year we have a large number of derailments, derailments caused principally because of a lack of good equipment at the various elevator handling sites. It has been apparent to the members of the committee that you could not address the boxcar shortage and solve that problem unless we solve the overall problem of revitalizing and rebuilding the rail lines and so the committee chose to introduce legislation patterned after successful legislation which has been in operation in the neighboring State of Iowa. In that state the Legislature adopted a bill which will provide for revitalization of the equipment through a cooperative process and basically it operates in this manner. A railroad fund is established. The state contributes to that fund. The shippers contribute to that fund and the railroads contribute to the fund. The fund is then drawn upon to rebuild railroads to new specifications as determined by the group that is given that