

April 9, 1979

LB 457

SENATOR FOWLER: I guess, Senator Murphy, an analogy would be that if I was to come in and say that we did not need public hearings before a school board sets a budget or before a city council sets a budget because really their comments have no impact and it is a technical decision anyway and we all know what they are going to say, they are going to say, come and say taxes are too high and the budget is too much, that you would disagree very violently with that sort of concept. I think that there would be comments beyond just the question of saying that rates are too much. There would be specific examples or concerns that people had with regards to utility costs. Perhaps they would be upset about salary increases for the Board of Directors as is in the case with one power district. Perhaps they would be concerned about the commitments to certain power plants or the pulling out of commitments to certain power plants. Perhaps they would be concerned about how the rates are allocated and these are the sorts of things that I think would be brought up and I think it is important that the elected or appointed board have the chance to hear the reactions, just like, although very few people in Lincoln go to the school board budget meetings, I would not want to see those eliminated, and just because they may come with not the best technical precise information, I still think they should be given a chance to comment.

SENATOR MUPRHY: Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Murphy, were you through? Okay. Senator Schmit, do you wish to be recognized? We are discussing the bill itself.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, we have had as has been indicated by Senator Fowler several bills that deal with utilities and utility rates, rate setting procedures and various other proposals. I think that we continually forget the fact that in Nebraska we are a public power state. The public owns the utilities in this state. There may well be some instances in other states where utilities are not responsible to the people of that various entity but in Nebraska we elect boards of directors of the utility companies. If we do not like the way they run those companies we can elect different people. I fail to see how when the costs of the production of electricity continue to escalate due to the cost of petroleum and the increased cost of coal, when we find harassment of our utility systems because of the concern by some well-meaning individuals of the dangers of nuclear generated power, I fail to see how you can expect that utility to hold down