

March 21, 1980

LB 649

of the State of Nebraska that I think we should take a very serious look at and I will explain where my concern came from in this area. In the area around Comstock, Nebraska, the Nebraska Public Power District is planning on building a generation facility. The original site agreed upon by the Board of Directors of that district was close to the river, Middle Loup River, and they were going to construct the facility using surface water for the cooling towers. Because of the appropriations system in the use of surface water in the State of Nebraska, the Director of the Department of Water Resources determined that there was not enough unappropriated water for them to use this surface water on a year around basis for their cooling towers so denied the permit. Now the alternatives that the district had at that point in time would be to construct a facility to store water and use storage water during the off season or during the irrigation season or to move to a different site and put in wells and use underground water and that, in fact, is the decision that the directors made. They moved the site. They are going to put in some wells and use underground water. My concern is there is nobody has the authority to examine the impact on the surrounding area, on the hydrology of the surrounding area with the use of this water. This amendment would set up a procedure where a permit would be required before they could in fact use underground water for their cooling towers. Now I have been in contact with some of the people in that surrounding area and they are very concerned because they have already had to extend the depth of some of the irrigation wells. They tell me that their aquifer is already declining somewhat and it seems to me that if the need for electricity to power irrigation wells, and that is basically the need for the larger generation facilities of this state at this point in time, then we should examine the impact on irrigation wells in the area where the facility is going to be built. Now I realize this is a rather complex issue for most of you but it is an issue that I feel very strongly should be addressed. If we are interested in irrigation and the irrigated farm in the State of Nebraska we should be concerned with what happens to his underground water, what happens to his aquifer. I think it fits in with the intent of the Legislature in passing LB 577 of a few years ago and the Water Management Act but, Mr. President, because of the magnitude of this amendment and because after I have introduced this amendment or had this amendment drafted, Senator Kremer, the Chairman of the Public Works Committee, has assured me that the Public Works Committee will study this issue over the summer and that we will examine the possibilities for next session. So with that in mind,

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