

April 16, 1981

LB 506

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Koch, do you wish to speak to the bill?

SENATOR KOCH: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, first of all, I want you to know that I have recovered from yesterday afternoon and hold no grudges but I have to answer Senator Cullan for just a moment. I am going to support 506. In fact, I would probably support even more tax for these noble purposes but as one who uses cigarettes more than I should I keep smoking because I want to help the University build buildings. We built a great monument and we named it after the Athletic Director, and we are building other noble monuments, and we are going to probably put some name on those. But I want it on record now that when I came here I smoked about a pack a day. Now I am up to three and now when we take this I will probably go to four simply because to get enough revenue to carry on research on what causes hardening of the arteries and other kinds of diseases. But the thing I really want to get to is this. It has always been difficult for me to understand why when we know with considerable scientific research that tobacco is harmful to people, yet the Department of Agriculture and the federal government sees fit to subsidize that product at a higher level than they do other things that are healthier for us. I have always been concerned about this and I have a feeling if they cut out the subsidy for tobacco, a package of cigarettes may go to \$3 a package. That in turn might discourage some of us from spending \$9 a day for cigarettes, and, Senator Stoney, I know you are sitting over there with your tongue in cheek but some of us didn't start smoking until late in life and we are trying to catch up for those early days. The first time I tried to smoke as a kid was corn husks. I did that back of the chicken house only it didn't go over very good. So it took me a long time to get back to it again. Now another thing I don't understand is why we don't tax cigars, pipe tobacco, skoal, chewing tobacco and all the other items which lend themselves to certain kinds of diseases I am certain. The last thing that bothers me is that when we raise it a penny I wonder what the vendors are going to make, because you raise it a penny and immediately those who have vending machines can easily jump it a nickel and that is a pretty tidy profit and blame it onto us for raising it a penny. I just want to put all this in perspective and hope that this body will seriously think about what we are doing. Not that I mind that penny, but if I had my way, I would sooner take it out of our general fund and I would sooner support Eppley from our general fund than I would always looking for a sin tax because that is pretty easy. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Before we proceed to the next speaker, it is