

May 11, 1981

LB 234

SENATOR MARSH: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, I rise to support this amendment. We are talking about employers who are paying for an employee who is injured on the job. This is one of the best reasons for having a safe working environment. We are not talking about every person who is hurt on the job. We are only talking about those who are high paid employees now. Why should they, if they are hurt on the job, be asked to take a remarkable reduction simply because the State of Nebraska is not keeping current with the increases in the work place? This is less than a 6% increase. It is a reasonable figure. It in itself is a compromise figure. I urge your support of this amendment.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Landis.

SENATOR LANDIS: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I just call to your attention that last week we voted on the Carsten-Landis amendment in LB 3, a sizeable benefit to existing industries and new industries. We have made some good faith attempts to make life easier for industry in this state this session. We also have been moving along LB 394 out of the Business and Labor Committee which represents a very fair and evenhanded approach to the unemployment compensation legislation. It, in fact, restricts certain kinds of benefits. It cuts benefits in half. We have also passed on the small forms consolidation bill which is going to consolidate paperwork essentially for business so that we have a series of proindustry initiatives this session that have been moving along very well. It seems to me that there is no incentive for somebody to injure themselves so that they can draw unemployment compensation. Nobody does that I believe so that we are not talking about some program with a lot of abuse. A 5% increase in one year when, in fact, wages are increasing at 9, 10 and 11% per year means simply that Workmen's Compensation will not be gaining at the same rate as wages. They will continue to lag behind and fall behind the average weekly wage so that there is no incentive there for abuse but, in fact, there is an attempt to make some kind of hedge against the effect of inflation for people that are out of work, who can't work because they are injured on the job. We are not talking about malingerers here or anything like that. We are talking about active parts of the state, the labor market who have been injured on the job and I think they are entitled to some kind of relief. We are talking about a less than 1% increase in the businessman's contribution rate or insurance rate to cover unemployment compensation, pardon me, Workmen's Compensation, with this measure. I think against the background of proindustry initiatives that have been moving along very well this session, this is a reasonable action to take to make sure that injured parties receive at least adequate compensation for their loss. I move the adoption of the amendment.

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