

May 22, 1981

LB 472A

SENATOR NEWELL: Mr. President and members of the body, I rise to oppose the returning to Select File of LB 472 for the specific amendment. Now we have not heretofore had an opportunity to talk on this issue on the direct issue involved, but I think there needs to be a little debate on this issue because, in fact, it is a very serious and very important public policy decision we are making in a very inappropriate manner, but yet a policy decision that this Legislature and the people of the State of Nebraska will be living with. Now first of all I would like to say that the issues have been discussed from time to time in the rotunda, on the floor, in our offices, on the way to our cars, etcetera, etcetera, and I appreciate those people who have been very sincere in their arguments and in their belief that this is an appropriate amendment. And for those who have been most threatening, like Reverend James F. Hunt of Temple Baptist Church in Omaha who has been exceedingly threatening in regard to this issue, I can only say that as a Christian man the issue itself is one we ought to be discussing and not threats, political consequence or any other kind of consequence, and I would admonish him in particular and others who make particularly harsh political and other kinds of threats. For those who have discussed it, I think the issue is very clear. It is a question of whether this Legislature is going to authorize civil disobedience. Now I want to say that during the Vietnam War there were many people who refused to serve their country. That very act of civil disobedience led to them being sent to jail or prosecuted for that sort of conviction. I have always had great respect for those people and I personally could not join them because I did not agree with them, but I always had great respect for those individuals who were willing to accept the consequences of their civil disobedience. However, we have here an issue, whether the Legislature, because we have individuals who say that they will not obey the law of the State of Nebraska should be exonerated, that we should change public policy, we should change the law to prevent them from going to jail because they choose to be civil disobedients, then I say, that that should be their choice. But this public, this Legislature, this state, should not run pell-mell to prevent a few who continue, who persist, in disobeying the law, who argue that it is their right to disobey the law because of their religious convictions, and I would argue that question. I hope somebody will talk about that. That is one that does deserve to be addressed on the floor of this Legislature. But they feel that we ought to change the law. They feel that we ought to, in fact,