

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President, members, as most of you in this room know, the Agriculture Committee did hear this bill. It has generated a great deal of controversy within Douglas County and the City of Omaha, and as Senator Labeledz has pointed out, I think there have been a lot of factors that have shown themselves in this issue that carried over to LB 365, most importantly the decision of the county to purchase Ak-Sar-Ben, if that, in fact, will take place. Secondly, the taxing authority that would be given to the county if they took over the affairs of the county fair board and, third, and unfortunately maybe the most controversial part which was thrown into this issue was the discussion of where to locate a city auditorium or to deal with that particular issue of a convention center. I think that most people would agree that there is a great deal of controversy in that aspect within the City of Omaha, but the committee was evenly split over what to do. I think many of us had misgivings about the direction we were headed. I suggested to a reporter not long ago that what we need to do on this issue is continue to be a partner in the discussion of this issue. I think that it is important that the Legislature be a participant in the discussion of whether or not Douglas County should assume the county fair board's authority and taxing authority, and it is my intention to introduce a resolution at the conclusion of this session for the committee to look into this issue as a study resolution if, in fact, the members from Douglas County would approve of that. So with that, I just wanted to explain the fact that the committee was split over what direction to go on this issue and I think there were some merits in the bill. There were some drawbacks that were drawn into this issue that were rather unfortunate, but at this time, I'll...I think with other members would adhere to Senator Labeledz's motion to withdraw.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Hefner, please.

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President, members of the body, I'm a member of the Ag Committee and I just want to explain my position on this bill. I did support the bill. I voted to advance it to General File, however, that vote failed several different times. The reason that I supported it was because I felt that at least it should be debated on the floor. However, I didn't support it until we were able to get several amendments on and one of the amendments says that the people of Douglas County would have to vote before we would allow them to do this. It was heavily lobbied by both sides and some of the Douglas