

November 11, 1992 LB 1

Senator Beutler referred to the fact that urban legislators have consistently helped rural legislators, and they have. And I do not take one thing away from the urban legislators who fought very valiantly and successfully for their constituents, that's what they're supposed to do. We did not do a good job of preparing and presenting our case. We didn't have much help from the rural sector. But I don't think anything happens by accident on this floor. I believe that there are those people who, when they crafted 775, were fully intended, at that time, to bring about a bill such as what happened with the...with the reimposition of the personal property tax, after having safely exercised their option of getting their taxes, personal taxes exempted under 775, then go ahead and put them back on. I want to make a statement here for the record, because if you don't do that from time to time you're held accountable. Those individuals from rural Nebraska who supported the amendment that said you can tax ag land differently than rural property were totally wrong. It was totally wrong for them to do so. Let me tell you why. Last year, for the first time, we placed an excise tax, I call it a property tax, on fertilizer. First time that I know of on this floor we ever taxed an input of any kind, for agriculture, industry, or business. That is a precedent, ladies and gentlemen, which is going to be repeated time and time and again as this body needs money. Number two, I voted against the amendment to tax ag land generally for two reasons. First, I said it wasn't fair. In my district we have approximately 50 percent rural property, 50 percent urban, and it wasn't fair to the small homeowner in Bruno, and Dwight, and Brainard, and Wahoo, and David City because if they lowered the tax on my farm 20 percent, they had to raise the taxes on Mrs. Belshin's (phonetic) house and Mrs. Bruner's (phonetic) house, Mrs. Kotenski's (phonetic) house by 20 percent, that wasn't fair. But there's also a selfish reason why I voted against it. And, ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry to say that I believe the time will come when I'll be proven right, when this body will say, wait a minute, we have all these environmental problems, we have problems with our water supply, the Cities of Lincoln and Omaha must invest billions of dollars in new well systems because of contaminated water in the Platte, therefore we must do something to discourage, to discourage the irrigation and utilization of chemicals and fertilizers. How better to do it than to tax farmland at 120 percent, or 150 percent, or 200 percent of market value. I hope the press prints this, ladies and gentlemen, because out in the country today not one farmer in 1,000 thinks that can happen. I predict it will