

reform the welfare system or not. We can quibble about some of the details, some of the amendments, but nevertheless unless we can come up with a plan that can remedy the situation we face, we may end up with no welfare plan at all. Yesterday, one of the national newspapers printed some interesting statistics. They said that over the last 30 years this nation has spent over \$5 trillion in the antipoverty programs that included the creation of more than 300 separate federal welfare-related programs since the war on poverty was commenced in 1964, and the poverty rate at that time, in 1964, was 15.1 percent...or it's 15.1 percent now compared with 14.7 percent when President Lyndon Johnson launched the war on poverty. So since 1964 we haven't achieved much with the program we have, people are completely unsatisfied with it, they want change. This bill is an attempt to make changes, achieve efficiencies and come up with a different approach that perhaps will work. On that basis I think that...I've never liked food stamps. I've always thought that food stamps were demeaning. I've stood in grocery lines, like all of you have, in Safeway and the other stores and I have felt a sense of empathy for the young women and others that use food stamps. I think that food stamps are like play money, they're like monopoly money, people can spend them without really realizing that they have a monetary value and that it would be much more realistic to furnish these recipients actual cash and permit them the same opportunity the rest of us have to deal with our funds. I somewhat share Senator Witek's interest in the electronic approach to this situation. It's undoubtedly too early and too expensive to do that today but it is something that should be looked into and studied, and I will support her amendment when we get to it, because that may be an ultimate answer. In fact, we all may end up using debit cards to buy our groceries in the future. It's a more economical way to do it, and that may be the wave of the future. But for the time being there's certainly an economy in going to a cash basis. I think we have to...if we're going to expect people to enter into a self-sufficiency agreement and work towards self-sufficiency and work toward education and entering the job market, then we have to treat them like adults and give them the cash to meet their obligations. I think our present plan, the present welfare plan that we've had for the last 30 years has been a virtual total failure. It's been a disappointing, disastrous, destructive, damaging and denigrating program that needs to be reformed, and this part of cashing the food stamps is part of the overall change. And I'm sorry that I have to disagree with Senator Janssen but I think that this amendment