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question.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Bromm, would you be willing to yield to a question.

SENATOR BROMM: Yes, Mr. President.

SENATOR HILGERT: Thank you. Senator Bromm, when we talked about Universal Service Fund, what we are talking about is a fund for small companies, we are not talking about funds for poor people who can't afford to continually pay the ever rising rates they are faced with.

SENATOR BROMM: Well, that's...that's not a yes or no answer because many of the people who are poor and who can't afford high phone bills will be helped by a strong Universal Service Fund.

SENATOR HILGERT: How might the people in my district, in Omaha, be helped if we strengthen the Universal Fund as far as their basic rates, and let's assume for a moment that no one makes any long distance calls in my district.

SENATOR BROMM: Oh, well,...

SENATOR HILGERT: Because we're talking, you know, because the problem I am faced with, and we had lunch about this, and I appreciate your openness and your candor, and the frustration that I have, and I'll just get to the point, maybe you can...and I'll let you comment on it is that the rates are continually going up. My constituents are...some are not of very high means, and when it goes up a few dollars a month, that's significant. I mean these are the same people that, frankly, think a reduction in sales tax is significant, but that's another debate. And then they call the Public Service Commission, and the Public Service Commission tells my constituents that it is the Legislature's fault and Senator Hilgert's fault that these rates are going up. And that's, frankly, a little frustrating for me to deal with.

SENATOR BROMM: Yeah.