

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

February 10, 1999 LB 231

schools and municipalities. I don't remember who all. But the fact is, that's another hit of about \$1.8 million for the natural resource districts. They don't have that kind of money to work on water quality problems. They have money for soil and water conservation, which is General Fund money. They have a little bit of flood control money, which is General Funds. They have some development money, which is General Funds. And they have property tax money, majority of which is probably paid by rural people, but a heck of a portion of it's paid by city people too. And so it is not at all inappropriate to suggest that the fertilizer industry, my God, the polluters, should be treated as we treat all other industries and they should be accountable for a portion of the clean-up costs of this massive change in technology that we've experienced since the Second World War. Year after year, five billion pounds of chemical fertilizer, and it's been a good thing for us, but we can't just pretend that we can take the good things that come with it and neglect and ignore the bad things. And the whole revolution of center-pivot irrigation has simply exacerbated the problem in a major sense and in a positive sense in that so much more land is being put under production and put under monolithic corn production, that is year after year of corn rather than rotating crops, all of that has resulted in huge additional increases of fertilizers being dumped on the land. It's not all negative. Center pivots can apply fertilizers in more timely manners and smaller doses, so it...there's a positive aspect to it. But the point is that, in terms...in terms of changes in agricultural society, two tremendously big things have happened that involve the chemical nitrogen and which has some side effects and consequences, and those side effects and consequences require some careful management and...

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR BEUTLER: ...we can do it. And in the Central Platte NRD we have actually...they have actually succeeded in turning around the nitrate levels. They now have some wells that are showing less nitrate than previously, and that's...and it's just recently that that has happened. But in most of our NRDs the nitrate rates continue to go up. There is a history to the fertilizer tax, but I would strenuously disagree with the concept of giving and keeping words in this whole history of the