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PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...make on the microphone is probably nothing new, and I don't think there are any black holes around here, whether it's Appropriations or Revenue, Senator Beutler. I think that ultimately the decisions are made by 25 people on the floor, and I...the longer I'm here, the more confidence I have in that process.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Beutler, on the Wickersham amendment, followed by Senators Raikes and Thompson.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Lieutenant Governor. members of the Legislature, Senator Wickersham opens up the question of the philosophy of equalization as it applies to all state aid funds, and I think this is a topic that is worthy of each and every one of us standing up and saying what our philosophy is. With regard to school aid, in my mind I have always made an exception to school aid, notwithstanding that I thought that school aid impeded the proper restructuring of school systems. And I made that commitment because, one, the federal courts required us to and, two, I care about the children, all children wherever they are, especially. But when you start talking about state aid as equalization in all other areas, on the one hand you might say that's good, it's feeding money into areas of the state that are having problems maintaining their infrastructure. On the other hand, what you're doing is permanently financing infrastructures that may not make economic sense, that perhaps should be allowed to mitigate and transform and metamorphosize into whatever it is that makes sense for the economies of those local areas. Are we in the business of subsidizing infrastructures everywhere? If cities in the year 1900 were of a certain size, would you have expected the Legislature in 1900 to do everything possible with state aid formulas, to be sure the size of that city was the same in the year 2000? I think not. But that's the tendency that these structural...that these structural state aid things take on when you begin to call them equalization. Beyond that, I'm not really sure that Senator Wickersham is going after equalization as such. Some of the things, for example, in the state aid formula for NRDs which he has now withdrawn but which he's still advocating, takes into account things like number of