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know many schools must be located in those areas where distance is a factor. And I have faith. I think one of the things that we're trying to prove in this bill is that there is local control and the fact that those local boards will...that local K through 12 will make the best decision. So I know that we're going to continue this discussion and I think it's going to be a very respectable discussion and...but I do think that we have to look at and manage the limited resources that we have in this state and use them in the best possible way. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Stuhr. (Visitors introduced.) On with discussion of the Raikes amendment, Senator Beutler, followed by 13 others.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I first came in the Legislature in 1979, and Class I school district issues were in front of us even at that point in time. And we've dealt with them almost every year, in one way or another, every year I've been in the Legislature. And at the beginning it was a discussion that had two parts. One part was simply a very good and needed discussion, a discussion that's still good and needed, about the value of education and the pros and cons of educating children, all our children, whether it's in a Class I or a Class VI, the whole question of the structure of education and the economics of education as it relates to the child, and what the children can learn. And then, as you're all quite aware, there was another big part of it that used to be a lot bigger, but that was the whole problem of declining populations in the rural areas and the question of schools as really an economic development mainstay, the whole problem that's epitomized by the statement that you often hear: If our school goes, our town goes. And that's a hard, hard discussion for all of us, and I want you to know that the Legislature has been sensitive to that over the years; that in fact, in my opinion at least, the slowness with which we've dealt with the Class I problem over the years is a tribute to the sensitivity of the Legislature to abrupt changes in school systems that may cause even "abrupter" changes in certain towns in rural Nebraska, but what we've done over the years is try to separate the two issues and to slowly take out of the equation and out of the argument those things that have to do with economics. But