

DeCamp takes his last stand

Senators nix Chambers' proposed Farmstead amendment

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guttled. The Legislature wouldn't resist the lobbyists, he said.

"When you have a lame-duck senator who can still wield that kind of power," he said, "it means there's people carrying the water who will be here even after the lame-duck is gone . . . those lenders ought to give Senator DeCamp a job after he's gone because of the work he's done for them." DeCamp was defeated Nov. 4 in his bid for a fifth term in the Legislature.

In response, DeCamp chided Chambers for assuming senators can't think for themselves. He admonished senators to avoid falling into the trap of seeing every agriculture or finance bill as a war between "the little guy" and the "evil lenders."

"Gentlemen, this is not a war, and if you continue to see it that way, you'll destroy what's left of the economy of this state," he said.

Unless normal business principles are allowed to prevail, DeCamp said, farmers will be unable to get credit. He

said his amendment allows farmers to operate under the system set up by the Farmstead Act — "which I don't believe would work" — or waive homestead protection and be more certain of getting credit.

Sutton Sen. Rod Johnson, sponsor of LB3 and the original Farmstead Act, called DeCamp's amendment "a blessing in disguise" because it removes any remaining barriers to agricultural credit. But Lincoln Sen. David Landis, speaking in support of Chambers, said those who believe greater access to credit is guaranteed by the amendment "are working in John DeCamp blue sky."

Finally, Chambers said, DeCamp's amendment should be repealed because it takes away the farmer's assurance that he'll still have a home if he is foreclosed.

"The small farmer, the medium-sized farmer is through," he said. "We ought to be talking about a transition period to get them through the time until Old Man and Woman Poverty comes knocking at their door."

But Chambers' motion to return LB3

to the second stage of consideration failed, 34-11, with eight of the votes coming from Omaha and Lincoln senators. After Omaha Sen. Peter Hoagland withdrew a second motion to return LB3 to the second round, the bill passed on a 39-10 vote.

After the Legislature had adjourned, Johnson said he was relieved at the bill's passage because "I was fearful that Senator DeCamp would be successful in his repeal motion." DeCamp moved Tuesday to repeal the original Farmstead Act, but offered his compromise amendment after senators rejected his repeal attempt.

Unless unexpected problems arise, Johnson said, he doubts senators will return to this issue for some time. Other proposals aimed at easing farmers' burdens will likely be debated in the next Legislature, he said.

Before the final debate on LB3, senators voted 48-0 to pass LB1, which sets up a central filing system for liens on farm products. LB2, which pays for the central filing system and special session costs, also received 48-0 approval.

Future uncertain for DeCamp

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he said, started "a process of education" that he tried to encourage during his career.

"If you never dare," he told his fellow senators, "you're never going to get anything done. And those who never dared, never did." Although he made some enemies, he said, "at least I dared constantly to face up

to the issues." DeCamp's final battle on the legislative floor ended in defeat. He urged senators to defeat UNL economics professor Greg Hayden's nomination to the Nebraska Investment Council, but lost on a 25-11 vote. Omaha Sen. Vard Johnson, speaking against DeCamp's motion, charged DeCamp's opposition to Hayden was based on Hayden's

association with the Kerrey administration and the campaign of defeated Democratic gubernatorial candidate Helen Boosalis.

Despite DeCamp's defeat, Sutton Sen. Rod Johnson predicated the colorful legislative style he learned from Carpenter will live on.

"I'm sure some brash young legislator will come along," he said.

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