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Union Board to revise its budget before appeal

By Lorna Nissen

The Union Board will present a revised 1982-83 budget in its appeal to the Committee for Fees Allocation Tuesday, Daryl Swanson, Nebraska Union director said at Wednesday night's Union Board meeting.

Based on the NU Board of Regents' guideline to increase budgets by 10 percent, the board asked CFA Jan. 28 for an increase of \$1.62 per student per semester for 1982-83, but was refused.

CFA recommended that the board reduce the Campus Activities and Programs' budget, from \$266,047 to \$163,993, eliminate the Nebraska Union employees' meal benefits, estimated at \$12,500, and not in-

crease the current \$100,000 emergency reserve fund by \$51,738, before the budget is reconsidered.

Swanson said union employees receive discounts on meals and pay only the wholesale cost of the food. Eliminating meal benefits would be a savings for the unions, because the estimated \$12,500 actually represents a loss in profit.

Instead of eliminating meal benefits, Swanson said he would rather wait and study the situation.

Swanson said because the Nebraska Legislature advanced a 6 percent increase for the university Tuesday, he will present a revised budget based on the reduced figure.

With a 6 percent increase, the board would advance a \$10,013 student fee increase request, from \$564,213 to \$574,226. The request would mean a 23 cent increase in fees instead of a \$1.62 increase per student per semester.

Currently, unions get \$12.68 per student per semester in fees. Swanson said by not increasing the emergency reserve fund and by basing the estimate on a 6 percent budget increase, the unions would get \$11.23 per student per semester in fees.

A \$1.45 reduction in fees, from \$12.68 to \$11.23 means total student fees would increase by less than 23 cents next year, Swanson said.

Presenting a smaller budget may con-

vince CFA to withdraw its reduction requests, Swanson said. All decisions depend on the regents either accepting or challenging the 6 percent increase, he said. The board would be in a better position to defend its budget if the legislative increase was known, he said.

Swanson said CAP Director Sara Boatman will outline CAP's responsibilities, staff positions and procedures to try to convince CFA of CAP's importance. If CFA's recommendation succeeds in reducing CAP's budget, more than 50 percent of the full-time staff and possibly CAP-East would be eliminated.

Swanson said the money gained from reducing the cut in the emergency fund could be used to reduce the cut in CAP.

Fowler opposes trains of radioactive wastes through Lincoln area

By Duane Retzlaff

State Sen. Steve Fowler of Lincoln and other opponents of plans to ship high-level radioactive wastes by rail through Lincoln starting in September, called for the state to stop shipment plans until safety questions are answered.

In a Lincoln Coalition of Railway Crafts-sponsored news conference Thursday in the State Capitol Building, Fowler said there is no immediate need for the Cooper Nuclear Station in Brownville, Neb., to ship its nuclear wastes elsewhere, when its own storage facilities won't be filled until the end of the century.

Low-level radioactive wastes currently are shipped through Lincoln, from various nuclear stations in the country.

Michael Carper, the chairman of the Lincoln Coalition of Railway Crafts, which represents 17 rail union locals in the Lincoln Area, said he met Wednesday with officials from Burlington Northern, the Nebraska Public Power District and General Electric, the three groups involved in the rail shipment plan.

Carper said they told him they had to ship the highly radioactive spent fuel rods now to make room in case of a reactor shut-down and because shipment costs would be higher later.

Carper said their reasons for shipment aren't enough to justify the risks involved.

The Cooper Nuclear Station plans to make about 30 shipments of high-level radioactive material in the next three years, Carper said.

Burlington Northern's route through Lincoln approaches from the southeast, roughly following U.S. Highway 2. The rail line turns north, running parallel to 9th Street, and goes east somewhere north of O Street, going out of Lincoln along Cornhusker Highway.

The eventual destination of the nuclear fuel is the General Electric Morris Plant in Divine, Ill., a temporary storage facility, Carper said.

Nuclear waste containers built for railroad shipment are made of steel and lead, weigh more than 20 tons and resemble a miniature reactor housing, yet they have not been proven safe, Carper said.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's crash and safety tests on the railroad nuclear waste containers were faulty, Carper said, because the tests were made on now-obsolete models and the testing procedures were incomplete. Carper said most nuclear waste containers now in use have not been tested.

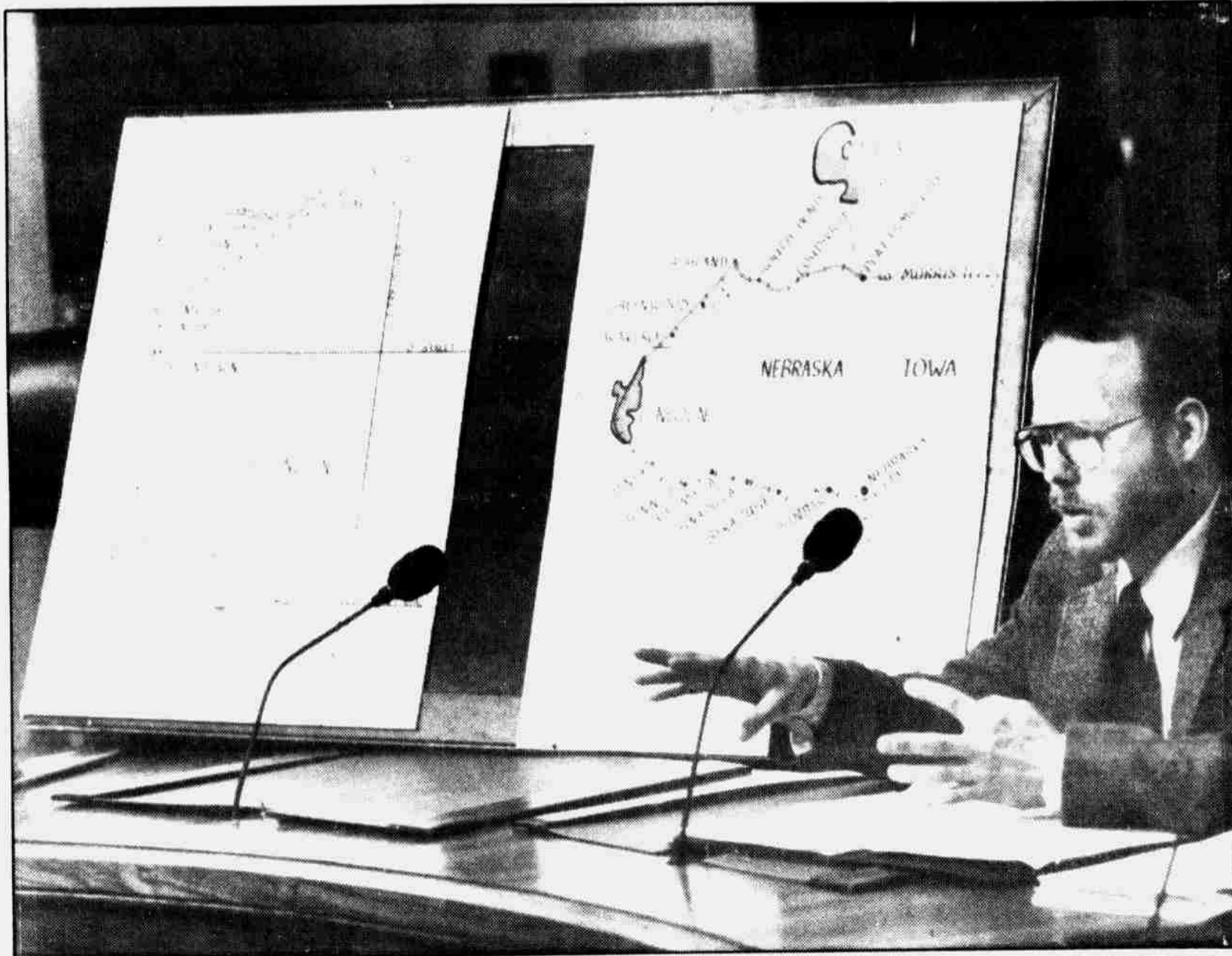
In addition, Carper said, the NRC does not inspect the containers after they have been initially licensed. Containers that develop faults could leak radiation in an accident.

According to information provided by the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, the NRC's test agency estimates a massive rail accident involving spent fuel in a city could cause more than 1,000 instant deaths and tens of thousands of cancer victims.

Carper said local emergency crews, without adequate training and emergency equipment, may not be able to handle a railroad related nuclear accident effectively.

According to a Department of Energy report, most high-level wastes, such as the spent fuel rods scheduled to be shipped from the Brownville plant, are shipped by railroad.

Spokesmen from the local chapter of the Sierra Club, Nebraskans for Peace, the U.S. Farmer's Association and the Near-South Neighborhood Association made statements in support of the Lincoln Coalition of Railway Crafts' position.



Mike Carper, chairman of the Lincoln Coalition of Railway Crafts, criticized Burlington Northern Railroad's plans to transport nuclear waste through Nebraska.

Lincoln senators support bill allowing voters to decide city sales tax rate

By Alice Hrnicek

A proposal to allow Lincoln voters to raise the city sales tax by 1/2 cent per dollar received qualified support from several Lincoln senators.

The senators said they would prefer that the state provide more city aid because a city tax increase might erode the state tax base.

Dave Landis, the Lincoln senator who sponsored LB591, said he introduced the bill because it allows Lincolnites to respond to economic hard times.

"This is a reaffirmation of authority given to voters and the City Council," Landis said. "I think that's the best place for that authority to be."

The City Council would have to request that the issue be placed on a ballot before the public would vote on it.

Lincoln city lobbyist Deb Thomas said the increase from the current 1 cent sales tax would raise \$5 million per year. The extra money would be used to replace endangered federal funds to maintain roads, storm sewers and mass transit, she said.

State leadership

Lincoln Sen. Don Wesely said voters should be given the chance to decide on the increase. But he said he prefers that the state supply needed money.

"I don't see that (state) leadership coming forth," Wesely said.

Wesely said he was concerned that if Lincoln raises its tax rate, state senators will be less likely to raise the state tax rate when needed.

"There's a good chance that once Lincoln takes the step, the smaller cities will also," he said.

Insisting that claims about eroding the state tax base are unwarranted, Lincoln Sen. Steve Fowler said he supports the bill.

"The provision to allow the local election removed some of my fears about it," he said. Fowler said he would have opposed the measure if tax-raising authority had been given to the City Council.

Omaha increase

Sixty-nine percent of Omaha voters approved a 1/2 cent sales tax increase in 1980 to raise the city's sales tax to 1 1/2 cents, said George Ireland, Omaha's acting financial director.

The Nebraska Legislature had allowed the Omaha City Council to raise the tax to 1 1/2 cents on a yearly basis in 1979 and 1980. In 1981, the Legislature passed a bill that allows Omaha to keep its current rate until voters request otherwise, Ireland said.

The increase was needed to pay higher salaries to police and fire employees, as ordered by the state Court of Industrial Relations, he said.

In 1982, the sales tax is projected to raise \$34.6 million, or 22.9 percent of the total city budget, compared to 25.5 percent raised by property taxes, Ireland said.