

should have a death penalty, but how we're going to make the death penalty work, how we're going to make it effective, but I'd like to address myself back to the original question of whether or not we should have the death penalty in Nebraska and I think if I hear you correctly, I hear most of you saying that you do favor the death penalty and so, what I am hoping to do is address myself to your sensitivity that you will continue thinking about this particular issue, continue trying to decide whether it really is the kind of solution that we want in terms of the State of Nebraska. I say this because I once believed very strongly in the death penalty. I once believed that it was a deterrent, but through the course of two or three years of very intense personal struggle trying to decide what I would do if I ever got to the point where I had to push the yes or no button on this issue, I decided that I simply cannot approve of the death penalty. This past Saturday in one of my public meetings in my district, we were discussing the death penalty with a group of my constituents. I asked them how many of them favored the death penalty and predictably about three-fourths of them raised their hands and said yes, we do favor the death penalty. Then I asked them the second question: How many of you, if you were to be put in a position where you could see the person who was to be executed face to face, would be willing to throw the switch, would be willing to push the button? There were only about a fourth of the men that were willing to say yes, I'd still do that. I think this is what we're being asked to do this morning. I think this is why we should consider it so carefully and even if we say yes today, should continue to consider it carefully. Last fall in a meeting with a farm group, the farm, this group of farmers were attempting to work out a resolution on the death penalty that they would pass on to their higher organization. Most of the members of this group too were in favor of the death penalty but as the discussion went on, one man said something in particular that I, that really struck me. He, after listening to all of this discussion favoring the death penalty, said; how many of you have ever seen a rich man get executed? I think this is one of the basic points and this is that we simply do not have a capability in the United States to uniformly apply the death penalty. In my discussions with constituents at home, many of these people have reminded me that the Bible, which is the basic heritage of much of our thinking, condones and approves the death penalty, but I would like to respond to that by saying that I don't think that any responsible biblical scholar can make an absolute case for the death penalty by using the Bible. I think one of the most powerful stories which really is in opposition to the death penalty, concerns the Hebrew King David who became the direct lineal ancestor of Jesus Christ. David plotted the murder of a man by the name of Uriah, was pronounced guilty, condemned by God through the prophet Nathan, and yet, he was allowed by God to continue his life, to continue being a great king and to become the ancestor of Christ. He was allowed to redeem his life and I think this is an important consideration. Most of us have heard that the death penalty is a deterrent. This is the reason why I once believed in it, but I simply cannot find the evidence anywhere--statistics, states that do not have the death penalty, countries that do not have the death penalty, that justify saying the death penalty is a deterrent. We were told that it would keep prison guards, for example, alive, that it would protect them. We contacted the National Institute of Corrections. They told us that in the past two years when the death penalty has not been applied, that there have been no prison guards killed in a prison. I turned up a study comparing the rate of homicide concerning policemen in states that did not have the death penalty prior to 1966 when, which was the last time we had the death penalty, to those states that do have the death penalty and interestingly enough, states without the death