

April 5, 1979

LB 101

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Johnson, we are speaking to the Newell amendment.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of this body, the Newell amendment is a very beguiling amendment. It says simply let's have one super commission. This will be the Commission on the Disabled and we will place deaf persons and blind persons and other handicaps as we come to recognize them as such and other disabilities as we come to recognize them as such under the one commission. It seems to me that that has been a tendency that we have had in government over the years is to take separate entities and put them together under one umbrella organization. We have seen it happen in Douglas County with the establishment of the Eastern Nebraska Human Service Agency, taking a variety of different functions and putting them under one, supposedly to save money and supposedly to save personnel and to make for better government. I don't think that has always worked. I think, in fact, what we have seen as we have merged bodies, groups, commissions and the like is we have ended up with one large umbrella agency with each function continuing to go its own separate way. Now it seems to me that, in fact, given that phenomenon that we have observed over the years that it really doesn't make much sense to start out with a super agency. I, like Senator Labeledz, like Senator Chambers, would prefer to start out with one, a Commission on the Deaf, to meet a recognized need, to provide a modest amount of funds, to at \$150,000, and to control that funding in subsequent years through careful appropriations and the like. I would rather start slow and then see what happens. Now I, like Senator Merz, serve on the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee and I can tell you, fellow Senators, that when this bill came before the committee I, like a lot of you, said, I really don't want to establish another commission. I do want to save money and yet when I heard the story that deaf persons in this state had to tell, I was very moved and I recognized that we really as a state, needed to establish a commission that would be a strong advocacy force in our state for the needs of deaf people. I should say in a biblical sense that my own heart was moved and I think that what Senator Labeledz brings to us today is the right thing and the right thing for us to do to vote for this commission. I would, therefore, urge you to reject this beguiling amendment of Senator Newell and to go forward and move this commission bill forward. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Kahle. Senator Chambers.