

April 9, 1980

PRESIDENT LUEDTKE: The Chair recognizes Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the Legislature. I rise to oppose the confirmation by this Legislature of the reappointment of John Greenholtz to the State Parole Board. I do so reluctantly, but I do so because of a number of reasons that I will list for you now and I believe very strongly in this position. The Parole Board is a very important board. It has a lot to do with our correctional system. It has a lot to do with our judicial system, and how we treat and care for those who have violated the law in this state. It is a very important position and it is one which calls for a number of qualifications, including judicious temperament. It is on that point that I rise in opposition to the Greenholtz appointment. There are a number of particular points that I would like to make at this time concerning that. John Greenholtz has been supported in his reappointment because he is tough with criminals and that is a position that is very popular today and one which I believe is probably necessary under the circumstances. But it is not because he is tough with criminals that I oppose his reappointment. Rather it is the fact that although he is tough with criminals, recognizing the fact that they have violated the law, that they have taken action which has caused them to be placed in the prison and thus should be punished for their action, they are people nevertheless, and it is because there are times in which it becomes questionable whether or not the Parole Board and Mr. Greenholtz in particular recognizes the fact that these are people, people who have done wrong, people who have been punished and are now before the Parole Board for release, who have served their time and are being considered for release into the community that I have to oppose this reappointment. See, we must realize something. Although we would like to have a situation where when someone violates the law, has done wrong, we put them away and not have to worry about them again, that is not the situation in this state, never has been and never will be. Ninety-nine percent of the people that enter the prison in this state are released from that prison at some point, are part of the community again, and so much as we may despise what they have done, hold them in contempt for their actions, nevertheless almost every one of those individuals are some day going to be part of our community again. And when we get into a situation where those people are treated not as people with responsibilities and rights and then release them into the community and expect them to behave as normal citizens, well I think we are fooling ourselves, and that is really