

May 4, 1981

LB 561

I think the law would have to be boiled down to the presumptive maxim, "Children before adults," that is, with the exception of today's action on LB 561. Apparently today we choose water before children, lakes, recreation, water impoundment, aquifer recharge before children an interesting and I think misguided prioritization. Now of course we probably would all agree to the idea that children are a more valuable resource than water in contravention to the speech that Senator Peterson gave and generally speaking we would say that human resources, children, are a higher priority and a greater resource than some natural resource like soil, air or water. I hope this body would do so and the question is whether we mean that all the way down the line or not. Do we really mean that all children are a resource or do we, in fact, mean only the children of white, middle class, taxpaying, well-to-do people are our greatest resource. And that is what we get into when we talk about the ADC payments because you see, we can all mouth platitudes. We can all mouth kinds of easy political statements in which we promise grand futures for children with bright eyes and good educations but not all children fall into that category, not all children are the products of whole and stable families with a sound economic base, an excellent sociological profile and an excellent opportunity for success in life. And the question is whether or not we intend to place the priority of children before grownups with the added caveat that that be all children, children from broken homes, children from disadvantaged homes, children with economic and sociological needs that are going unmet, that do not have excellent housing, that do not have first rate clothing, that do not have adequate nutrition. Do we really mean for the law to extend to them as well? I hope we do. I hope we really do and I guess I have an ironic laugh on my face because I'm not sure we really mean that. I'm not sure we really mean...

SENATOR CLARK: You have one minute.

SENATOR LANDIS: ...that we want to extend the law and its benefits and the support of government to all children but, in fact, only to those children that probably come from homes like our own for the most part, upper middle class, wealthy, well-to-do, white homes for the most part. I hope that is not our perspective. I hope we can broaden our own to see that water is not the most important resource, soil is not the most important resource but that children, that life is the most important resource and that we can't distinguish between those raised in upper class homes on the west side of Omaha or in the south side of Lincoln but, in fact, that all children should have those kinds of supports and benefits that we grant generally across the board to people from homes like our own. I hope that we