

March 15, 1982

LR 202

that were so strong in favor are starting to be eliminated and those deterrent effects that we talked about are being found to be in research not to be valid. And so for the many different reasons that have been expressed and for those personal reasons that I just shared with you, I do not see a reason to support the death penalty any further. And if you think that those of us who are up for reelection that are concerned about (interruption)...

SENATOR LAMB: Your time is up, Senator.

SENATOR WESELY: ...political consequences have to do what is right at this moment and show some political courage.

SENATOR LAMB: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, there is what you might call the machinery of death that has to be put into operation and maintained by somebody. There is a judge on the U. S. Supreme Court named Rehnquist who is very strongly in favor of the death penalty but he has stated that the way the U. S. Supreme Court has dealt with these appeals when they come up, it is a virtual impossibility to execute anybody. He said the death penalty in America is an illusion. The Wall Street Journal wrote an editorial and said the death penalty has immobilized us all, that the death penalty has become trapped. People who believe in the death penalty nevertheless are not anxious to see executions because they find them abhorrent, that the court system while allowing a death penalty to be considered constitutional has to build in enough delays and appeals to make sure that an innocent person is not executed. I gave you all handouts, I don't know if you read them or not, but had death penalties been expeditiously or hastily carried out, twelve to fourteen innocent people that were documented in the handout I gave you would have been dead. But because of the delay that must be built into the system, it was found out that they were innocent and the state should not kill them. The very safety, the safety net, if you will, that is being sought in administering this penalty is the thing that makes the penalty impractical. There are three levels of appeals so that you ought to get an idea of the years, the money, that have to be expended. When you are sentenced to die in Nebraska, there is an automatic appeal. It occurs automatically. You go to the State Supreme Court. If you lose there, then you go into the federal system and you appeal that loss all the way up to the U. S. Supreme Court. If you lose there, that is the first track. You come to a second track. You go back to the court that sentenced you and seek postconviction relief. You try to get them to mitigate the sentence or whatever relief you are seeking to avoid the death penalty or to have the conviction overturned, whatever you think you can get out of the court. If you are denied that relief, then this is appealed all