

March 17, 1982

LB 202

freshman class of Senators, this is the first time that I have heard this issue. Now Senator Chambers could have brought LB 202 up during the last session had he wanted to, and we have only had one day really of good discussion on it, discussion that is leading us towards making the compromises that are necessary to pass a good piece of legislation. Traditionally, I have been against capital punishment, but four or five years ago I had a change in heart largely due to the fact that my family has suffered through two homicides. Not that I am recommending that any of the people that were guilty of those deaths deserved capital punishment but it certainly did bring the issue closer to home and made me empathize not only with the victims but those that were the survivors, the relatives and the friends. I am in a position of transition on this issue, and to a certain degree I well understand as a State Senator what is at stake. What is at stake really is my private conscience and representing my district, and sometimes those two are at odds. It is a lucky Senator indeed that finds himself supporting not only his district interests but also his own conscience and that the two coincide. I feel on this issue I am going to represent my district and I am sure that a lot of you will look at it purely in those terms, but I am not so sure if I have a second chance to vote on this issue, but I also understand what that indicates. It indicates a stand of being somewhat similar to Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate could have made a decision but he yielded to the masses and we all know what happened, and even though he washed his hands, history has still maintained that his hands were bloody in that affair. Now, colleagues, I understand the public's feelings on this issue very well, and I will tell you the thing that they are most angry about is not so much the capital punishment issue, is that people who have been convicted of serious crimes have been able to have those sentences reduced either by early pardon, things like pre-trial diversions, plea bargainings, using high powered attorneys. Such a case is in today's paper dealing with a man by the name of Von Bulow, I recommend you looking at it on page 26 of the Omaha World Herald, who injected insulin into his wife on two occasions and killed her on the second occasion. Now he was convicted on two counts of murder, but if he serves those sentences concurrently, he will be eligible for parole in seven and a half years. This is what gets people up-tight and angry. Now Senator Chambers' bill, LB 202, for me, if I am going to be angry over the deaths that occurred in my family, metes out justice equally. There is no plea bargaining. There is no reduction in sentences. There is no early parole.

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