

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Oh, okay. But nothing has been done since '89 to alter the penalty with reference to either one, would you agree?

SENATOR ABOUD: Yes,...

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Okay and I...

SENATOR ABOUD: ...that I know of. I didn't introduce any legislation, there might have been other...

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Right, and to my knowledge nobody else had, and I didn't remember exactly when you had brought it in, but I knew that the first time around you had. So from '89 to '95 is six years, nobody has seen the need, despite all the talk about the war on drugs, to increase the penalty for dealing powder cocaine, nobody. And I'm not in the business of seeking increased penalties. There have been articles written, even by conservative, I call them arch conservatives or reactionaries, columnists, such as William F. Buckley, saying that drugs should be decriminalized, because he compared the cost of what is being done with the so called drug war with the totally ineffectiveness of that so called drug war. When the country was talking about interdicting or stopping drugs from coming into this country from other countries, they would boast when they said they had intercepted 9 percent of the drugs coming into this country, but they didn't tell the true story, which is that 91 percent was coming in. So if 91 percent of the drugs were coming in, then it is clear that that attempt to stop the drugs was not effective. Studies have indicated that to treat people for addiction costs about \$4,000. This is on a national basis. To incarcerate somebody under one of these drug cases costs about \$24,000 a year. So the question was asked by an editorial in USA Today a few weeks ago, why does the country continue, Congress, specifically, with what they call the war against drugs, when that so-called war has failed. Not only is it not diminishing the use, the sale, and the consumption of drugs, but the use of hard drugs is exploding among teenagers, and there is more use of hard drugs throughout society, but a shock to many people is that percentagewise the use of hard drugs is much lower among black people than among white people. And although the majority of people convicted of using crack are black, less than 3 percent of black males use crack. So we are talking about a small percentage of a minority population being