

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Madam President and members of the Legislature, some Christian philosopher or writer once said, and I don't know whether he did or not, but people would always quote it to me, no one can...maybe it was G.K. Chesterton, nobody can say that Christianity has failed because the fact of the matter is that Christianity has never been tried. Maybe that's so with that. But I would take that statement and apply it to our discussion here. When has there ever been an attempt, a genuine attempt, to deal with juveniles in a way that could be deemed rehabilitative? The idea has always been punishment, to get them out of sight. One youngster escaped from the youth center in Omaha because the room was so filthy. Who cares about going into these places to see what these young people face? I have to acknowledge that I have not gone through there to see whether or not even basic sanitation requirements are met. But if the reason a person has for running the risk involved in an escape and facing the possibility of increased punishment because of that escape, and it's based upon the lack of cleanliness in the facility, that should make us wonder more about how this place is run than about the youngster who escaped. But I think there's a tendency now, as what are called the moral bonds in society loosen and people at all levels of society are found to engage in criminal conduct, lewd and illicit behavior, a scapegoat has to be found. And since somebody who is strong, with a voice, can stand up and speak for himself or herself, a different more vulnerable target has to be found. And in this society, a war is being waged on the young people. They are blamed for everything that is wrong in this society, yet there is nothing that any young person has done which cannot be shown to have been done by what is considered an upstanding pillar of the community who is an adult. So rather than condemn these children and talk about how God forsaken and wicked they are, we ought to be giving them rewards for learning so well from the examples that they are presented by adults. Young people don't use the majority of narcotics that are consumed in this country. They certainly don't predominate in the area of pushing and selling and supplying. It's adults, it's business people, doctors, lawyers, even judges. And yet all of society's wrath and ire will be turned on the children, and we say, well, there's no alternative but to lock them up. To me, that signals a greater failure on this, the part of society than talking about distributing condoms or providing