

(Start Belt #12)

I have sponsored the bill for two or three years now and I have more time and blood in this bill than anything else, but at the same time maybe I have too much in it and can't make a fair decision and so I want to give you the arguments on both sides. The bill is the amendments which would become the bill is a comprehensive program to attack the problem of alcoholism. I'm going to give you the major points of the bill rather than to try and go into detail because if you get going into much detail we will be here for three weeks. The major points of the bill then are this. It would decriminalize alcoholism as such by decriminalize I mean simply that it would no longer be a crime, to be intoxicated, or drunk in a public place. However, there would be provisions to handle those who were drunk in a public place or those who were victims of what would become the disease of alcoholism rather than the crime of alcoholism by recognizing alcoholism as a disease you have a number of implications and things that naturally follow. These effect almost every segment of life from the insurance business which is affected by this bill which now has to recognize it as a disease and provide insurance coverage to the hospitals which have to become involved in treating it to the alcohol distributors and sellers who have to finance the program to the individual citizen or father or mother or husband or wife who has the authority to recognize the disease and implement measures to put the person involuntarily if that needs to be done into treatment. What are some of the other things then? By providing financing from a tax on alcohol you set up a commission and give this commission through the department of health power and authority to create rules and regulations build alcoholic treatment centers to do the whole thing in other words. There are provisions in the bill for voluntary treatment but as I say for involuntary treatment. What are some of the implications of decriminalizing alcoholism and making it a disease. Well for one thing, the policeman who finds somebody in an intoxicated condition in a public place could no longer take him and lock him up in the jail then run him through court. Instead he would if the person requested, and was capable of making somewhat of a coherent decision have to take the person home, or if the person was not capable in the officers opinion of making that decision he would have to take him to a detox center. However what happens in the small towns where you don't have these things. These are just some of the questions. They say I summarize the bill, a very comprehensive program and the major points again in the bill decriminalization of alcoholism and treatment of alcoholism as a disease with all the ramifications necessary for the treatment of it as a disease. Now very briefly I am going to give you the arguments in favor of it and then I'm going to give you the arguments against it. The argument in favor of decriminalization are that of the present time we are spending millions of dollars in running people through jail and we are not attacking the problem of alcoholism directly. We are not curing people effectively and alcoholism continues to increase. We know for example that yesterday the World Herald that we have 482,000 juveniles alcoholics in the United States of America. We know that we have about 10% of the adult population who are alcoholics. Under the definition of the medical definition of alcoholics. We know from evidence where this program has been tried on an experimental