

April 5, 1979

LB 101

SENATOR LABEDZ: Helen Keller once said...

SENATOR NEWELL: You didn't want me to talk, okay.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Helen Keller once said that if she had her choice of being blind or deaf she would take being blind. The reason she said this, that she would like to see everyone for twenty-four hours just block their hearing, clog their ears with cotton, do something so they couldn't hear a thing. At the same time they would not be able to speak because most of the fourteen thousand deaf people in the State of Nebraska have no power of speech. Thank God, we have special education today and the special education and the Nebraska School for the Deaf because we now are trying and doing a very good job of teaching these youngsters how to speak because usually a deaf person does not speak and some of the adults that I have talked to, and I should say that I have been speaking to and they have been listening to me by lip reading or by sign language, cannot speak. Most of the people, and there was over a hundred of them at the hearing, could not speak. We had to have interpreters there standing in front and Senator Merz mentioned the fact. It was very emotional because they couldn't even speak to us. Now if the blind came in of course it would be just as emotional with them but the fact is there is a difference when you don't hear and when you don't see, there is a difference. They should not be put in with a commission on the disabled or the disability or whatever you call it. We should have definitely a Commission on the Deaf and if we do have one on the blind, I am on the Appropriations Committee, Senator Newell, and it is unbelievable the way we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for different agencies come in with requests. Evidently you should be there and put them all under one agency. I don't see why we should have to have Department of Labor, Department of Revenue. Why don't we have one director over them all? It is the same thing. We cannot mix them. We've got to have the Commission on the Deaf and we have to have a Commission on the Blind, so be it, but I don't think state government can operate under one director although you might come back and say we are now. We are under the Governor but we are talking about people and \$150,000 is pittance compared to what is being spent in the State of Nebraska right now. I would like to also thank Senator Chambers because he put it in better words than ever I could do it as to the difference between the blind and the deaf and the disabled. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL PRESIDING