

May 9, 1979

LB 262

a hero. There were blood wars being declared, this martyr, this hero. Execution seems to have a mystique about it that can take and completely reverse conditions. It makes heroes out of hoboos. It makes martyrs out of very low life people and it occurs whether it is heads of state or whether it is bandits, such as, John Dillinger, Jesse James, you name them, or Charlie Starkweather. Posters, Charlie Starkweather, we all talk about the big punishment we did to Charlie Starkweather, huh. We got Charlie, didn't we, except they make movies about Charlie today in which Charlie comes out pretty much a hero. They have books about Charlie. They have posters about Charlie. Charlie is a hero and we all know, and I think I know better than the rest of the people in this room because I used to work in the Lincoln Police Department and I saw the pictures and I saw the records of what that human being, who was lower than a human being, did to other people, and what did we do to him? We spent tens of thousands of your and my money...

SPEAKER MARVEL: You have a minute left.

SENATOR DeCAMP: ...and then we executed him and we thought we punished him. Wouldn't it be better if Charlie Starkweather and a lot of others were working today as living examples, fifteen, eighteen hours a day, paying back society for what they did. Charlie got us. We didn't get him. Charlie got us. If he were out there today he wouldn't be a hero. He would be the villain he was and he would be paying it back day by day by day, and instead of spending millions of dollars on all these others who we never execute anyway and make heroes out in that pen, we would be making them the villains they are. That is why I changed. When you see the most obvious that what we are trying isn't working, that is when you step back and say, let's change it and make the whole system work and this is the big obstruction at this time. Rightly or wrongly, it is not working. Let's try something else.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President, members of the body, this is a very emotional issue but I still have to oppose LB 262. I agree with the Judiciary Committee that we never should have brought this to the floor and I doubt whether an hour is enough to debate this vital issue. I believe that the death penalty is a deterrent. I believe it is a penalty for cold-blooded murder. Our good friends to the north, the State of South Dakota recently instated the death penalty. Why? Because they believe that it will deter