

March 24, 1982

LB 202

PRESIDENT: We are ready for agenda item #5, motions. A 15 minute limit has been placed on this. LB 202, Mr. Clerk. Do you want to read the motion?

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Chambers has made a motion to reconsider the vote to indefinitely postpone LB 202. Senator Chambers' motion is on page 1249 of the Legislative Journal.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, this can be what you call dreaming the impossible dream. To be frank with you, deep down inside I know why I do what I do, but at a more superficial level I really don't know why. I go through the trouble to compile information, to gather statistics, to share with you the findings of various studies on the issue of the death penalty. I have researched the statistics given by the FBI which indicate that after executions occur homicide rates skyrocket. After I gave these statistics, some of the people who had been telling me about the deterrent argument and saw that this destroyed it, said, well, statistics don't mean anything. Yet we use statistics when we make projections for a budget in the Legislature. Insurance companies use statistics and must use them. They are used for every purpose. The death penalty is such a difficult subject to argue because we do not argue it in legislative assemblies on the basis of the facts that swirl around the issue itself. So those people who are in the position that I find myself in trying to salvage something not just of the murderer who has been convicted and sentenced to die but salvage something of the conscience of the society that has decided it should kill its own citizens to show that killing is undesirable. We, who seek the abolition of the death penalty, are forced to continuously give argument after argument based on new findings to deal with the same nonrational arguments of those who are for the death penalty. All the side favoring the death penalty has to do is say, remember the victim, which we all do, say it's a deterrent although the facts show that it clearly is not. So where do we find ourselves? Like the person trying to break down the proverbial open door. You cannot do that. I have given you a handout this morning which is filled with cases of people sentenced to die who insist on having that penalty carried out. That establishes for them the death penalty is not only not a deterrent but it has been an invitation to murder. They acknowledge that they went to various states to kill somebody