

November 20, 1986

Carpenter; a young black man with a fiery temper, named Ernie Chambers, and he has mellowed a little; a gentleman named Wally Barnett; another young fellow named P.J. Morgan, and myself. We went out and there on the steps of the Capitol, with nobody there except maybe, what 100, 150 police, FBI, you name it, right, completely surrounded, with their walkie-talkies, waiting for the violence, and laughing because nobody was there. That is right. We had seven, eight, nine people there. But we decided we'd go ahead anyway and hold our hearing. Then in the distance we started hearing a noise, and the noise grew louder, and we looked. There, marching down the street, 25 to 30 abreast were businessmen, soldiers led by a young kid with one wooden leg, and students to the tune of not 100 or 1,000, or 5,000, but to the tune of between 5 and 10 thousand people they poured in and filled those steps of the Capitol. And we held our hearing, where the Legislature said we couldn't, on an issue that didn't maybe directly relate to the farm economy, or didn't relate directly maybe to the interest rate. Yes, it dealt with something outside the borders of Nebraska. It dealt with the whole world. It dealt with issues. One after another the students spoke and gave their opinions, and some of the soldiers who had been there gave their views. Basically, the message was we are not being allowed to win, we are not being allowed to lose, we are just being kept there, so do one thing or the other, allow us to win or lose. That was the first State Capitol where they had had a resolution and actually had a hearing. And Nebraskans learned from it. They learned, for the first time, that there were two sides to the Viet Nam war, and maybe all wasn't perfection, and it started a process. It started a process of education. And I guess I've tried, over the 16 years I've been here, to do that repeatedly. And I guess I would submit to you and suggest to you if you were going to do something in the future, the legacy I would leave, to the degree that any one person can leave a legacy, is if you never dare, you are never going to get anything done. They who never dared, never did. We dared to hold the hearing. We started a new educational process. And for the 16 years since then I've tried to dare to present this idea, or that idea, or make sure both sides got heard this way or that. And, yes, I've incurred some enemies and, yes, I've made some mistakes. But, at least, I never, never consciously dared to face up to one of the issues. I would ask you, in the future, to do that, because if ever there were tough times, and if ever there were tough decisions to be made, they are now. So, don't be afraid when Ernie Chambers raises something that becomes a little obnoxious and you have to deal with it. Don't be afraid to bring it up, throw