

EDWARDS INTERVIEW

why virtually all the people on death row are poor. They could not afford to pay for a high caliber of legal representation. Do you believe that?

EDWARDS: I don't know that I would say that as an absolute, but I certainly see that a person has far less chance of getting the death penalty if he has a good attorney. First of all, a good attorney who is knowledgeable and sees the seriousness of the case and the validity of the evidence will try to cop some kind of a plea for a lesser sentence. If he or she is stupid and doesn't understand the import of the witnesses or doesn't investigate properly or school himself or herself properly may rush in to trial and not realize the jeopardy he is placing his client in. Definitely good counsel at the trial level is 98 per cent of the battle.

PREJEAN: If you do run for governor again, will the death penalty be a plank in your platform?

EDWARDS: No.

PREJEAN: Why not.

EDWARDS: Because I think people in Louisiana are satisfied with the present state of the law and as a politician I don't want to kick any sleeping dogs. I gotta be a politician for a little while (smiling). I can't be a statesman forever. It's just not the kind of issue you can win on.

I turn off the tape recorder and thank him for his time.