

STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

February 3, 1965

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman who introduced Mr. Griffith to discuss H.B. 509. Mr. Griffith stated that the measure seeks to abolish capital punishment and replace it with life sentence with individual provisions to meet the needs of the particular case. The jury would determine which punishment should be inflicted; noncommutable life sentence or parolable life sentence. He stated that this would have no effect on those individuals previously convicted and now awaiting execution. He further stated that he had cleared this proposal with the Attorney General and that it is declared constitutional by him.

Mr. Cram spoke in favor of the proposal; stating that he is an attorney and has been a County Attorney working from the prosecution angle; that he feels the death penalty is no deterrent and that it should be considered a matter of individual conscience.

Mr. Bob Shelton, Chairman of the Board of Social and Christian Concern for the Methodist Church, stated that his church had long held the position of favoring rehabilitation rather than retribution; that this theory is sound on a theological and psychological basis.

Mr. Griffith stated that he would distribute some material prepared by Dr. Joe Satten, Director of the Division of Law and Psychiatry at the Menninger Foundation. He further gave statistics to substantiate his claim that capital punishment is no deterrent to crime, pointing out that in the cases where innocent people are convicted, there is no going back and correcting the error when execution has occurred. There was discussion as to the cost of confining a prisoner for life, and it was pointed out that probably no one would want to place a price on life.

After questions by members of the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.