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The case against capital punishment

By LORAIN McCLISH

A Lansing attorney who is barnstorming around the state in an effort to counter petitions circulating now which ask for the death penalty in Michigan, was in Oakland County this week to address the Farmington Area Clergy Assn. Eugene Wanger is a member of the Michigan Committee Against Capital Punishment, a volunteer group whose single purpose is to fight to keep intact that part of the state constitution concerning penalty by death.

The Michigan Constitution, revised in 1963, reads in part that "no law shall be enacted for penalty of death." If the proponents of a reversal get the required number of signatures on petitions by July, the proposal to re-establish capital punishment will be put on the ballots in November.

Incidentally, Michigan was the first state in the union, 128 years ago, to abolish capital punishment.

WANGER'S ARGUMENTS centered around 1) evidence which shows that execution does not act as a deterrent to capital crimes. 2) serious offenses are committed, except in rare cases, by the mentally disturbed or are impulsive. 3) conviction of the innocent does occur. 4) without the death sentence, more convictions are possible with less delays. 5) discrimination against the poor, the ignorant and the Blacks. 6) imitative crimes are stimulated by executions. 7) it is demoralizing to public officials dedicated to rehabilitation, and 8) society is amply protected by a sentence of life imprisonment.

Wanger hammered away on the man who was convicted of murder

"beyond a reasonable doubt" and then found innocent because someone had unearthed perjured testimony, mistaken identity, or a "frame up."

In Michigan, since 1910, at least nine persons have been wrongfully convicted, and later (for most of them years later) they were proved innocent and freed. "And that is only nine that we know of," Wanger said. "How many more like them are in jail right now?"

HE ALSO TOLD about the "suicide-murder syndrome," which has to do with the individual who kills in order to be killed, in turn, by the state.

In this connection, he elaborated on the violence that is committed in imitation of a particularly brutal crime (by the mentally

disturbed) brought to the public by "super sensational publicity."

Wanger's arguments were heavy on statistics that boiled down to show that "whites are twice as likely to have their sentences commuted as Blacks and this is evident in state after state after state."

He was very adamant on the subject of the death penalty making it harder to fight crime.

"JURIES ARE very reluctant to convict a man when a life is at stake, the deliberations are very lengthy. It's much easier, and with less delay, to get a conviction without the death penalty. And nobody is ever going to plead guilty with it," he said.

Further, he added, "Even appellate judges have been known to strain the law when a life is at

stake and this has led to all sort of controversial interpretations of the law between judges and lawyers.

"The result of this is that condemned persons have been given another chance and precedents have been set that shouldn't have been set."

The penalty for first degree murder in Michigan is now natural life and can be commuted only through what is called the governor's "power of mercy."

LESS THAN TWO weeks ago the U.S. Senate approved legislation to reinstate the death penalty for a group of serious crimes.

These include kidnapping, treason and espionage, hijacking, escape from custody and blowing up

government buildings when that causes a death.

Murder would be punishable by death according to the legislation if it was committed in especially heinous, cruel or depraved manner; if it was murder by hire; or murder of a high head of government.

WANGER SAID he was not only "available but eager" to accept speaking engagements. He can be contacted by writing: Michigan Committee Against Capital Punishment, 1202 Michigan National Tower, Lansing, 48933.

The petition circulators of the drive to put the issue on the ballot can be contacted by writing: Capital Punishment, Box 1776, Lansing, 48904.

A survival course for modern bachelors

By JUDITH BERNIE

CLARENCEVILLE — Can the fingers of the women's liberation movement be seen poking in high school curriculum and shaping a new course offering called "bachelor survival?"

Stated for the fall semester at Clarenceville High School, the class is designed to provide teenage boys "with the most basic and necessary competencies of maintaining a 'home away from home,' concentrating on such basic areas as cooking, sewing, washing and ironing, house cleaning and shopping."

Although the people responsible for the course, coop coordinator Ken Zornes and home economics department chairman Geri Moore, have planned it with bachelor living in mind, both agree that the same skills are applicable to marriage.

"My husband knows all these things," Mrs. Moore said.

Zornes, a swinging but competent bachelor until recently, said, "I tried to forget them, but my wife won't let me."

The idea for the course was actually a response to what Zornes was hearing from his students. "After the school prom last year, the fellows came in and told me they felt ripped off" when they took their dates to one of the nicer restaurants.

"We couldn't read the menu; we didn't know anything about the wines. How do you learn all this?" They wanted to know.

Zornes and Mrs. Moore took it from there, forming a course entitled "boys home economics" which struck both students and administrators as "blah."

According to Zornes, it became a case of what's in a name. When the two renamed the course, "bachelor survival" the response was tremendous.

Every day survival techniques such as "don't wash red and white socks together," the best cleaning products and how to read a lease will be included along with some social graces," Mrs. Moore explained.

"Most of it will be practical experience."

She plans to take the class to the supermarket to do a mock week's shopping, have them cook a breakfast, sew on a button and fix a zipper. Zornes will come in to "guest lecture" once a week.

"We plan a follow up survey after they've been out of school awhile," Zornes said.

"We'll want to find out just how helpful it really has proven."

A further survey might be taken seven or eight years later. It could show that newly married Clarenceville male graduates hooked their liberated wives not because of love or money, but because of the sharing they could do as a result of skills learned in bachelor survival.



SURVIVING WASHDAY is one of the matters that will come up in a course on home skills men need if they are to live in college dorms and apartments. It will be taught next year in the

Clarenceville School District. Here home economics teacher Geri Moore gives fellow faculty member Ken Zornes a couple of washday tips. (Staff photo by Bob Woodring)