

Governor Edward W. Hoch to Governor Fletcher D. Procter

Kansas Governor Edward W. Hoch of Topeka responds to a request by Vermont Governor Fletcher D. Procter of Montpelier for information on Kansas laws concerning capital punishment. Hoch states that Kansas laws allow for the death penalty but requires an order from the Governor. Hoch states his opposition to capital punishment and his belief that no Kansas Governor has ever issued an execution order [under this law], and that no Governor ever will. While executions by state authority were legal in Kansas from 1861-1907, the State Legislature imposed tighter regulations on death sentences with Senate Bill 18 (1872). The act provided the time of execution to be ordered by the Governor. Kansas Governors between 1872-1907 refused to issue execution orders, as required by law, effectively banning state authorized executions during that period. See Governor Procter to Governor Hoch, October 22, 1906.

Creator: Kansas. Governor (1905-1909: Hoch)

Date: October 31, 1906

Callnumber: Governor's Records, Hoch, Box 4 Folder 4

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 208786

Item Identifier: 208786

www.kansasmemory.org/item/208786

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Governor Edward W. Hoch to Governor Fletcher D. Procter

October 12, 1906

Hon. Fletcher D. Procter,
Governor of Vermont,
Montpelier, Vt.

My dear Sir:

The law in this state provides for a death penalty, but leaves its execution optional with the Governor after the prisoner has been confined in the penitentiary for one year.

No Governor ever has exercised, and I think none ever will exercise, this prerogative in the execution of any one. Personally I have always been opposed to capital punishment, and as a student of the subject have long since become convinced that it is not a deterrent of crime, but a promoter of it. To me the matter is fundamental. I can understand how those who believe that death ends all can take a life by legal process, but how one who believes in immortality and in the conditions precedent to the life hereafter for weal or woe, for heaven or hell, can consent deliberately to plunge a human soul into that hereafter, is something I cannot understand.

It is usual to say that time is given the criminal to prepare for that hereafter. But suppose he has not prepared. The time could never come when I would not be willing to give him still another chance. I would leave the final decision with Him who gave life and alone under normal conditions has the right to take it.

Governor Edward W. Hoch to Governor Fletcher D. Procter

(Hon. F. D. P. No. 2)

I believe capital punishment brutalizes mankind and contributes to the crime it was invented to prevent. Time was when executions were made as public as possible in order to teach object lessons to the spectators. But thoughtful people have long since come to the conclusion that these spectacles brutalized all who witnessed them, and so now we only brutalize a few choice witnesses in some prison enclosure. But the fact, after all, was what brutalized and this fact remained whether witnessed by few or many and is paraded next day through the newspapers, cheapening the value of human life in the minds of the masses in whose minds life is already too cheap.

I have no doubt whatever that the abolishment of capital punishment will ultimately greatly reduce crime, and I have no doubt whatever that Kansas is freer from crime of this character because of the humane attitude of our advanced civilization on the subject.

With great respect, I am

Cordially yours,

