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## Public Forum

Editor, WINNETKA TALK:

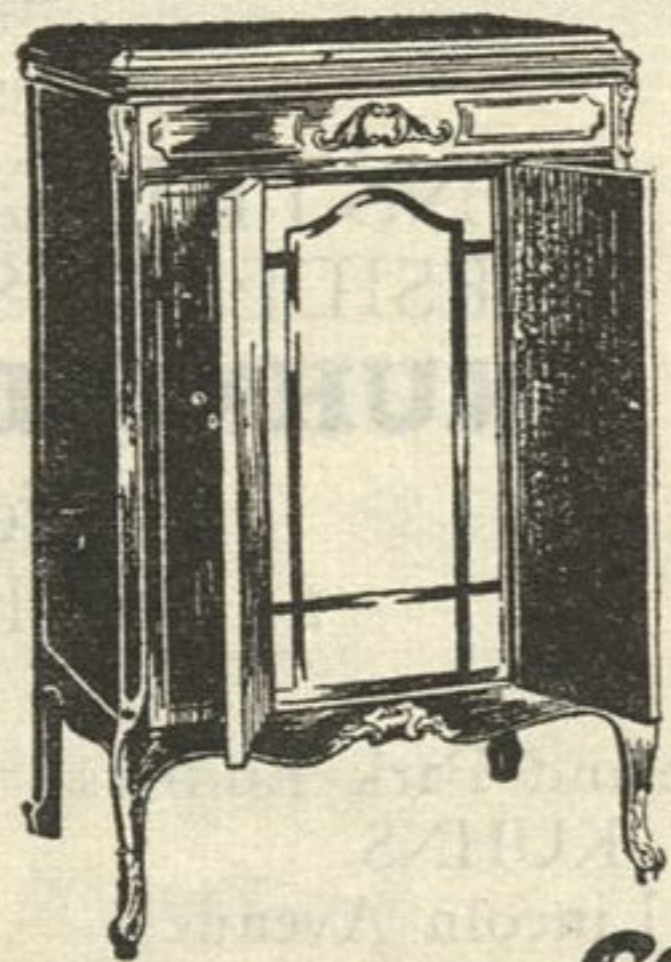
Now that the Gray-Snyder case has ceased to have news importance, isn't it time for thoughtful persons to consider whether capital punishment is worth to the nation all it costs?

In the case in question the murder was premeditated and brutal. Very justly the jury found both defendants guilty.

Such a verdict in the state of New York means a sentence of death. And so, because these two had killed another, we see the machinery of the state set in motion to kill these two.

Is it possible for a sovereign state to commit murder? Does the fact that a group of men constituting a legislature vote to require the killing of murderers by an employe of the state make such killings less than murder?

Are we ready to admit that the men in control of the capitol at Albany or at Springfield can absolve the warden of the prison from the stain of murder simply by passing a law that requires him to kill one human being because



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that person killed or helped kill another?

If we do admit that it lies with the majority in the state legislatures to determine when the planned and deliberate killing of one human being is murder and when it is not murder, then we shall have to admit that what is murder in one state is not murder in another state.

For example, the warden in New York is required by vote of the legislature to kill human beings with full intent and deliberation, whereas the warden in Wisconsin would be found guilty of murder for the identical act upon a convicted murderer in his charge.

What has the execution of Mrs. Snyder cost the nation? I leave out her co-murderer because the execution of men is comparatively common, whereas the electrocution of a woman is rare enough to hold intense public interest for days before it takes place.

The cost to the nation is not immediately reducible to terms of money, but rather in terms of the degradation of the human spirit when it, voluntarily or not, participates in the deliberate killing of another human.

It is quite safe to say that fully one million persons followed, at least in imagination, every detail leading up to the actual execution of Mrs. Snyder, from the moment of the farewell visit of her mother, the last earthly meal and what she ate or refused to eat, the shaving of a spot on her head to make sure of good electrical contact in the chair, the arrival of the executioner and the testing of the electrical connections, the preparing of the death certificate, the arrival of the twenty "guests" of the warden, and finally the death march of the doomed woman to the chamber of execution.

And then the final climax when the electrodes are attached to her head and wrists, the black mask drawn over her head, and the throwing of a switch that ends her human life.

Does it require a trained psychologist to appreciate that the sustained occupying of the public thought with all the ghastly horrors and grewsome details of the impending death of a human being, that is to be deliberately brought about at an appointed time by other human beings acting for the state, introduces into the emotional life of the public elements of fear and horror that do untold damage to a wholesome outlook on life?

We don't have public executions these days. Our legislators are unanimous in believing such exhibitions would not be good for the public eyes.

Our present method combines the greatest efficiency without in any way flaunting the moral standards set up by our legislatures. Instead of permitting the few hundred persons with untrained eyes who could get close enough to see anything in a public execution we exclude the public and permit the warden to invite twenty highly trained observers as his "guests." They furnish the eyes for the "excluded" public. Our radios and newspapers do the rest.

Charles A. Kinney

Based on population estimates for July 1, 1927, Illinois has an average of 130.18 persons per square mile—an increase of 14.48 persons since 1920.

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## FIND 1927 RANKS AS YEAR OF GOOD HEALTH

### Material Decrease in Disease Prevalence Indicated Throughout Illinois

An apparent six per cent decline in the mortality rate and a 21 per cent drop in the combined prevalence of typhoid fever, scarlet fever and pneumonia made 1927 one of the most healthful years in the history of Illinois. The statistics, made public this week by Dr. Isaac D. Rawlings, state health director, cover the first ten months of 1927 for deaths and the whole year for the prevalence of contagious diseases. They show 3067 fewer fatalities from all causes in the state for the ten months and a drop of 7306 in the case reports of typhoid fever, scarlet fever and pneumonia.

"Complete returns show that typhoid fever caused only 1292 cases of illness against 1677 during 1926 while provisional mortality statistics suggest that fatalities from this disease dropped below 200. This is in strong contrast to twenty-five years ago when mortality from typhoid rarely fell below 2000 per year.

#### Scarlet Fever Drops

"Prevalence of scarlet fever tumbled from 14,244 cases in 1926 to 11,842 last year, a decline of about 17 per cent. This marked decrease was doubtless favorably influenced by the sharp improvement in the sanitary quality of milk supplies in the state and by the widening use of vaccination against the disease.

"Pneumonia declined by fully 25 per cent, the cases reported dropping from 17,629 to 13,110. So marked a decrease in this highly fatal disease had a pronounced and favorable influence over the mortality rate.

"Smallpox incidence rose from 1098 to 1247 cases while measles went up from 31,511 to 41,014 but neither had a seriously unfavorable influence over the mortality rate.

"With 6335 case notifications diphtheria caused more illness than in either of the last two preceding years but the prevalence was still far below the average for the decade.

#### Big Mortality Drop

"Mortality returns from all causes for the first ten months stood at 68,505 against 71,572 for the corresponding period in 1926. Estimating a one per cent increase in the population these figures give rates, on an annual basis of 11.3 and 12.04 respectively per 1000 population. Since no serious epidemics complicated health conditions during November and December it is anticipated that final figures will show an exceptionally favorable mortality record for the year.

"Infantile paralysis was considerably more prevalent than at any time since 1921. Since this disease ordinarily travels in two year epidemic cycles a return wave in 1928 is feared."

### "The Gossipy Sex" Next

#### New Evanston Production

"The Gossipy Sex," a play which has a definite moral to teach but teaches it amusingly, is on the menu next week at the New Evanston.

And the "Gossipy Sex" is not, they say, the type that is commonly portrayed talking over the back fence. So there you have something unusual at the very start.

The play was written by Lawrence Grattan and was presented in New York City by John L. Golden, nationally known for his presentations of clean, enjoyable plays of American life.

The total wealth of Illinois is equal to the combined wealth of the neighboring states of Indiana, Wisconsin and Kentucky, plus that of New Hampshire.