House Judiciary Committee Meeting Monday, January 25, 1965

The House Judiciary Committee met in joint session with the Senate Judiciary Committee in Room 529 at 11:10 A.M. with Chairman Steadman Ball, Senate Judiciary Committee, presiding. Nineteen members of the House Judiciary Committee were present. Members Hill and Tillotson were absent.

Chairman Ball called the meeting to order. He announced that this meeting and the joint meeting to be held Tuesday, January 26, 1965 at 11:00 A.M. in Room 529 are to enable the members of the committees to hear presentations by the Kansas Bar Association Committee in regard to the proposal to reorganize the court system. Senator Ball introduced Philip Lewis who then introduced Beryl Johnson, John Blake, Jim Logan and Judge David Prager.

Mr. Lewis stated that first of all he wanted to clarify these presentations. He stated that they are here to try to be of as much help as possible. There have been very few comprehensive reviews of state judicial systems. This did not come about by reason of any plan to try to sell such a proposal as is here. It is up to the committee to decide whether any changes should be made. They felt that they should call together a cross section of citizens and decide whether any changes should be made. A list of these conferees is attached. Mr. Lewis stated that they had no concept of what would be involved when they started this study. He went on to state that when a close look was taken at the current judicial machine, most people were horified at our organization. There is no real organization. They came to the conclusion that a substantial revision of our judicial articles should be made promptly and that it is the responsibility of the legal profession and of the judiciary committees of the House and Senate to make this revision. He stressed the fact that all they are trying to do is give them something to start with and work from. Mr. Lewis then introduced Judge David Prager.

Judge Prager stated that he has the highest personal regard for the judiciary of the State of Kansas and that any comments are directed to the structure of the judicial system.

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Judge Prager went on to explain that in order to evaluate the Kansas courts today, it is of course necessary to have a standard or yardstick to serve as the basis for evaluation. The Joint Committee For the Effective Administration of Justice has established a crado or formula for affective justice. They have declared that justice is effective when it is:

- 1. Fairly administered without delay
- 2. By competent judges,
 - A. Selected through non-political methods based on merit
 - B. In sufficient numbers to carry the load
 - C. Adequately compensated with fair retirement benefits
 - D. With security of tenure, subject to an expedious method of removal for cause
- 3. Operating in a modern court system
 - A. Simple in structure, without overlapping jurisdiction or multiple appeals
 - B. Business-like in management with non-judicial duties performed by a competent administrative staff
 - C. With practical methods for equalizing the judicial workload
- 4. Under simple and efficient rules of procedure
 - A. Designed to encourage advance trail preparation
 - B. Eliminate the element of surprise
 - C. Facilitate the ascertatinment of the truth
 - D. Reduce the expense of litigation
 - E. And expedite the administration of justice

Judge Prager related background and statistics showing just how the Kansas court system does not meet up to these standards.

Judge Prager then presented a suggested system:

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One court of justice

Court Administrator -- one supreme court chief justice six associate justices

one court of appeals three justices

one district court (divisions as needed)

one magistrate court (divisions as needed)

Mr. Lewis emphasized the importance of doing something. He stated that they are not trying to sell this system to them, but are proud to present it. This is a model judicial article.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted Jack R. Euler

Minutes approved:

CONFERES FOR THE CITIZENS' CONFERENCE ON MODERNIZATION OF KANSAS COURTS

ON MODERNIZATION OF KANSAS COURTS		
Mrs. Verne Alden		Wellsville
Walter Anderson		Scranton
Whitley Austin	133 Overhill Road	Salina
G. C. Bassford	1411 N. Mill	Beloit
Mrs. Walter Bayless		Blue Mound
Mrs. William Beal	431 Court St.	Clay Center
Forrest W. Boone	First Nat'l Bank	Coffeyville
John A. Boyer	News Chronicle	Soott City
George M. Brown	833 North Main	Wichita
Oscar Brown	Farmers & Merchants Bank	Hill City
Paul R. Brown	1002 Bitting Bldg.	Wichita
Henry A. Bubb	700 Kansas Ave.	Topeka
Charles Carlson		Minneapolis
Charles Q. Chandler	First Nat'l Bank	
	105 North Main	Wichita
Donald Christy		Scott City
John H. Colburn	825 East Douglas	Wichita
Lyle Conley		Concordia
Maurice Coulson	2629 East Central	Wichita
Robert Cramm	Cheyenne County State Bank	St. Francis
James Cross		Lewis
Virgil Dechant		LaCrosse
Hart Dey		Ulysses
Robert Docking	Union State Bank	Arkansas City
Martin C. Dondlinger	1206 East Lincoln	Wichita
Dr. Fred Dunlap		Pleasanton
Martin K. Eby, Jr.	Box 1679	Wichita
Robert H. English		St. John
Mrs. Jack Focht	521 N. Fountain	Wichita
Dr. John D. Garwood	332 West 24th St.	Hays
Mrs. W. Carter Goodpasture	1031 North Yale	Wichita
Mrs. Bernard D. Grant	2400 N. Dellrose	Wichita
John P. Harris	300 West Second St.	Hutchinson
Rt. lev. Monsignor A.M. Harvey	Church of the Immaculate	
:	Conception	Leavenworth
C. R. Head		Neodesha
Mrs. Francis Heller	1515 Meadow Lane	Lawrence
Martin Hemken		LaCrosse
Mrs. R. Glenn Henry		Oskaloosa
Ed Hertlien	R.F.D.	Pratt
A. T. Heywood	406 Avenue A West	Kingman
B. D. Hixson	Hixson Farms	Wakeeney
Wharton Hoch		Marion
Mrs. Ellen Holman	218 Arch St.	Leavenworth

R.F.D. #2

2007 South Elm

Larned

Pittsburg

Wakeeney

Anson Horning

Rees H. Hughes

C. M. Hutchinson

Robert Jennison Lyn Johnesee Kenneth Johnson Fred M. Kimball Ernest Kissick Walter M. Lewis W. C. Long, Jr. P. W. Lundy Jack A. McGlothin Vaughn McColey Edward McNalley David R. Mackey Gib Mantey Walter Markel Fred Meek C. N. Moffet Ray Morgan Joseph Morris Stewart Newlin Philip Nicholson W. E. Oakes Carl O'Leary I. V. Patton Donald C. Peebles Walter C. Peirce

Ralph Perkins John Platt Harlan M. Potter J. Richard Pringle Miss Robena Pringle Harold M. Regier L. W. Rogers Wayne Rogler Lester Sage T. J. Scanlon Albert Schwartz Kenneth A. Scott Dr. John A. Segerson Ben . Sellers Russell Shellenberger Alau Sleeper Stanley Stauffer Fred Stein, Sr. Clifford Stone Byron G. Stout Mrs. Milo Stucky Carl Suderman Floyd V. Taylor Mrs. Patrick H. Thiessen Russell T. Townsley James Van Duyne

Cecil Vieux

Box 165

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R.F.D. #3

601 East 29th

307 West 3rd St.
1825 North Main

First Nat'l Bank 6815 Flint Columbian Bld. & Loan Assn.

Kansas Farm Bureau 2321 Anderson

6412 Parallel Ave. R.F.D. #1 2509 Beverly Court Buhler Mills, Inc.

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Jack Waldron
Dr. Ewart Watts
Mrs. Marjorie Welborn
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Robert Wells
Henry White
Robert H. Whitfield
Russell Winter
Rex Woods
Ernest Woodward
George Works
Thomas E. Wright
Rev. Robert W. Youngs

1901 Pembroke Lane

1917 Jackson St.

Methodist Youthville

Arkansas City Daily Traveler

Oberlin Herald

WREN, 1101 Fillmore First Presbyterian Church

235 Patton Drive

Hugoton
Mankato
Topeka
Lyndon
Great Bend
Garden City
Council Grove
Newton
Satanta
Arkansas City

Oberlin Humboldt

Topeka

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN KANSAS TODAY Hon. David Prager Topeka It is indeed a privilege to address this conference of distinguished citizens from every corner of Kansas. This is not a lawyers' meeting. It is in fact a citizens' conference where the ground rules must be candor, intellectual honesty and a courageous approach to a question which deeply concerns those who are interested in improving the administration of justice in Kansas. How can our outworn judicial system be modernized to meet the pressing demands of a fast-moving civilization? That is the issue we face tonight. In presenting a discussion of the Kansas courts today I am presupposing that all of the members of this conference have some basic knowledge of the Kansas court system. It would serve no useful purpose for me to repeat all of the material which is contained in the conference resource book. I will proceed on the supposition that all of you have completely read and studied the resource book and are fully familiar with the factual information contained therein. I would also like to make it clear at the beginning of this discussion that I have the highest personal regard for the judiciary of the State of Kansas and consider a great majority of the judges as men dedicated to justice and to the service of the people. Any comments then which are made are directed to the structure and organization of our judicial system rather than to the individual integrity of our judges. In order to evaluate the Kansas courts today it is of course necessary to have a standard or yardstick to serve as the basis for evaluation. The Joint Committee For the Effective Administration of Justice has established a credo or formula for effective justice. I think it would be most helpful to examine this credo and then take a look at the Kansas system and see how we measure up to that ideal standard. The Joint Committee For the Effective Administration of Justice has declared that justice is effective when it is: 1. Fairly administered without delay. 2. By competent judges, A. Selected through non-political methods based on merit. B. In sufficient numbers to carry the load, C. Adequately compensated with fair retirement benefits. D. With security of tenure, subject to an expeditious method of removal for cause. 3. Operating in a modern court system, A. Simple in structure, without 1. Overlapping jurisdictions or 2. Multiple appeals B. Business-like in management with non-judicial duties performed by a competent administrative staff C. With practical methods for equalizing the judicial workload 4. Under simple and efficient rules of procedure, A. Designed to encourage advance trial preparation B. Eliminate the element of surprise C. Facilitate the ascertainment of the truth D. Reduce the expense of litigation E. And expedite the administration of justice - 3 -

With these standards as the stars to plot our course let us turn now to the Kunsas judicial system and see how we measure up.

1. IS JUSTICE IN KANSAS FAIRLY ADMINISTERED WITHOUT DELAY?

A properly administered court system should dispose of the people's business with reasonable dispatch. It should be kept in mind, however, that speed in the handling of cases is not the most important consideration -- cases must be decided justly and equitably as well as promptly. For courts of general trial jurisdiction, such as our district courts in Kansas, it has been suggested that cases should ordinarily be disposed of within a period of six months. This goal has been established by the United States Supreme Court for the administration of justice in the United States District Courts. We should recognize that there are exceptional cases where justice may require more time for ultimate trial and disposition. But surely a period of six months for the disposition of the vast majority of the cases should not be beyond the reach of an adequate and effective judicial system.

It also seems obvious that the courts of this state should be constituted so as to dispose of litigation as it arises in order to avoid congestion and a back log of undisposed cases.

In this regard I might compare our courts with a business. In order for a business to survive the income must exceed the expenses otherwise the business will fail. Likewise in order for a court system to avoid suffering judicial bankruptcy, the courts must dispose of at least as many cases as are filed. Let's look at the balance sheet in Kansas. Ten years ago there were 12,066 cases pending in our district courts. In 1963 there were 21,154 cases pending. This means that during the past ten years the district courts have failed to dispose of 9,000 cases ready for judicial determination. The last year when Kansas district courts disposed of as many cases as were filed was in 1951; since that time the Kansas district courts have consistently been on the red side of the judicial ledger. To illustrate the inadequacy of our present system, in 1958 58% of the cases pending in district court were more than six months old; by 1963 this figure had increased to 67%. This is clearly a step in the wrong direction.

One reason for this increased congestion in our courts is the tremendous increase in the amount of litigation filed in our courts in recent years. For example in 1954 there were 2,026 felony cases filed in the district courts; last year there were 3.502. The same problem has been encountered in the courts of limited jurisdiction of Kansas. In 1956, there were 7,700 estates pending in probate courts; seven years later there were 9,691. In the county courts there was an increase of 350% in the number of cases handled between 1954 and 1963.

These figures make it crystal clear that today our judicial system is not carrying out the function of disposing of the people's litigation without delay which is certainly the principle function of any system of judicial administration.

2. DO WE IN KANSAS HAVE COMPETENT JUDGES SELECTED THROUGH NON-POLITICAL METHODS BASED ON MERIT?

In Kansas the seven justices of the Supreme Court are selected on a nonpartisan basis based on merit. However when we consider all of the district courts and the courts of limited jurisdiction in this state we find over 1000 judges serving the people of Kansas. All of these other judges are selected through a political method of some type--either by a partisan election or political appointment. An analysis of the appeals taken to the Supreme Court from the district courts of Kansas demonstrates that in past years only 2% of the decisions of the district courts of Kansas have been appealed to the Supreme Court. This means that, in effect, the district

judges have the final word in 98% of the cases which they handle; yet all of the district judges and the judges of the minor courts of Kansas are selected on a purely partisan basis.

In the past lawyers have not been inclined to oppose our district judges who are doing a satisfactory job. In the general elections since 1942 incumbent district court judges have been opposed about 13% of the time, but only 4% of the incumbent district judges were defeated by opposition candidates. The greatest competition has been in Sedgwick and Wyandotte Counties. Actually the experience in Kansas has been that incumbent district court judges seldom have competition and are very infrequently defeated. After a judge once gains office, in most instances he serves "during good behavior" or at least as long as he has enough political support to scare off opposition.

But there is always the threat of a partisan political campaign. The difficulty here is that many good lawyers with excellent judicial qualities simply will not accept judicial appointment because they do not desire to give up a successful legal practice for the uncertain tenure of the district bench. This is especially true in the more heavily populated areas where the strength of the two major political parties is more nearly equal.

I recall that a number of years ago a candidate for district judge rented an elephant which he displayed at one of the western Kansas county fairs with his name prominently printed on its side. This idea rather intrigues me. It might provide a fine yardstick for the selection of district judges. The candidate who can find the biggest elephant should be the judge. This to me makes as much sense as selecting judges on the basis of who has posted the most signs of who has the greatest number of spot announcements on radio and television or who might shake the most hands or kiss the most babies.

It is interesting to note that the canons of judicial ethics adopted by the American Bar Association specifically declare that a judge should be indifferent to private political or partisan influences and that a judge should not be swayed by partisan demands, public clamor or considerations of personal popularity or notoriety, nor be apprehensive of unjust criticism. Suffice to say partisan politics simply should have no place in our courts of justice.

3. DO WE HAVE COMPETENT JUDGES SERVING THE PEOPLE IN OUR COURTS OF LIMITED JURISDICTION?

In counties of 24,000 population or less, the probate judge, who is also the juvenile court judges and the county court judge, does not have to be a qualified lawyer. Yet these courts handle many cases involving sizeable estates and must make decisions bearing on the futures of many boys and girls in Kansas. They likewise have jurisdiction to deprive a citizen of his personal liberty.

It has been estimated we have around 230 justices of the peace in Kansas although there is no way to find out exactly how many there are at any given time or what they are doing. A JP with even a limited knowledge of the law is the exception.

We have 624 police courts authorized in Kansas. Only in the 13 first class cities must police court judges be licensed attorneys. Yet in 1959 the police courts of Kansas disposed of 109,747 cases and levied fines and costs amounting to about \$1,336,000.

How can any judge be expected to administer justice fairly and accurately with-

How can the people of Kansas ever expect effective justice so long as the judges of courts of limited jurisdiction are not required to be members of the legal profession? This is a question we should ask ourselves at this conference.

4. ARE THE KANSAS JUDGES TODAY ADEQUATELY COMPENSATED WITH FAIR RETIREMENT BENEFITS?

I think it is obvious that the best man cannot be attracted to the bench except where compensation is adequate to maintain the judges and their families with dignity and where the compensation is commensurate with the responsibility of the position.

According to the Journal of the American Judicature Society published in Dec. of 1963, the 1963 national average salary for justices of the Supreme Court was \$20,312, which compares with the salary of \$16,500 paid in Kansas. And in the same year the national average salary for courts such as our district courts was \$17,049 as compared with \$12,500 in Kansas. According to this survey made by the American Judicature Society, Kansas ranked 40th among the states in salaries paid to Supreme Court and district court judges.

It should be mentioned that in Kansas we have a retirement system which at this time pays a maximum of 65% of salary after twenty years service.

5. DO KANSAS JUDGES HAVE SECURITY OF TENURE SUBJECT TO AN EXPEDITIOUS METHOD OF REMOVAL?

The danger of loss of office in a partisan election by our district judges and judges of courts of limited jurisdiction has been discussed heretofore. What about those judges who prove to be hopelessly inadequate for the job because of senility or disability or incompetency or ignorance or arrogance or prejudice? Suppose there is some type of misconduct of a judge that does not warrant or require removal but requires some type of disciplinary action?

In Kansas compulsory retirement is imposed upon Supreme Court and district judges when they reach 70 years of age, except that they may finish out their current terms. Any judge who becomes physically or mentally disabled may retire before 70 upon being found so disabled by the Supreme Court. This statute is permissive, however, and a judge cannot be compelled to retire because of physical or mental disability.

There is no method of disciplining Kansas judges short of removal from office. In Kansas today Supreme Court justices and district court judges may be removed from office only by the cumbersome procedures of impeachment or resolution of both houses of the legislature by a two thirds vote. Probate judges and justices of the peace being constitutional officers could be removed only by impeachment. Judges of other courts are subject to ouster by court proceedings under the ouster statutes.

Of course all judges may be removed by vote of the people where public indignation is sufficiently aroused.

All in all, it would seem clear that Kansas does not have an expeditious method to compel the removal of or to discipline its judiciary.

6. IS KANSAS JUSTICE OPERATING IN A MODERN COURT SYSTEM?

The facts compel a negative answer. The Kansas court organization is complex rather than simple in structure and is burdened with overlapping jurisdictions and multiple appeals. We do not have a truly unified court system. In this regard I think it important to clarify what I mean by a unified court system. A unified court system nas been described as follows:

To illustrate the problem in Kansas let us assume that a lawsuit is filed in Butler county to recover \$550 in the county court of that county. After a delay of several weeks the case is tried before the county court judge with all the witnesses in court in person telling their respective stories. Let us assume the plaintiff wins the lawsuit. The defendant may then appeal to the district court in Butler for a new trial which requires all of the witnesses to appear again to tell the same stories before the district judge. Let us assume the plaintiff is again given judgment; the defendant may then appeal again to the Kansas Supreme Court as a matter of right for a review of errors of law. Under this procedure there has been in effect two complete trials of the case with two appeals provided. The time consumed in disposition of the \$550 lawsuit has covered many months. The same problem of overlapping jurisdiction and multiple appeals exists in our present system where appeals may be taken for a second trial from any of our courts of limited jurisdiction. Thus we have in Kansas a procedure which permits delays on and on and on ad nausea. Also should be mentioned the jurisdictional conflicts which arise rather frequently between the probate courts and the district courts. Since 1939 and as late as 1962 there have been a number of cases appealed to the Supreme Court of Kansas to determine what cases should be filed where and which court has jurisdiction. In some of these cases after many months of litigation, the Supreme Court has held that the case was filed in the wrong court, whereupon the parties had to start the litigation all over again. Under a unified court system consisting of one court with different divisions. cases could be freely transferred to a specialized division if it was erroneously assigned to the wrong division in the beginning. This would solve the problem now arising when a case is filed in the wrong court; the saving in time, effort and expense would be significant. There has been some discussion in Kansas about the feasibility of setting up appearanteed courts such as traffic courts or more recently family and domestic relations courts. I submit that this would be a step in the wrong direction. Under a unified court system judges can be assigned to work for which they are best fitted without being withdrawn permanently from the judicial force so that they cannot be used elseis such as to permit, but available for other work when the exigencies of the work of

where when needed. To quote Dean Roscoe Pound the answer is "not specialized courts but specialized judges, dealing with their special subjects when the work of the courts the courts require it. "

- 8. IS THE KANSAS COURT SYSTEM BUSINESS-LIKE IN MANAGEMENT WITH NON-JUDICIAL DUTIES PERFORMED BY A COMPETENT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF? In Kansas we have:
- 1. No court administrator to assist the Supreme Court in supervising the operation of the Kansas trial courts as a coordinated department of state government.
- 2. We have no program for the government of the personnel of the court system. We have not established statewide standards for the recruitment, promotion, compensation or retirement of court personnel.
- 3. We have no uniform procedures for the preparation and analysis of the budgets of the courts and for their submission to the appropriating authority.
- 4. We have no uniform procedures for the purchase of supplies for the operation of the courts.

5. We have no sound, complete, up-to-date statistical system to provide statistical facts—not merely as an historical device, not merely to record court cases, but as a tool to forecast court calendar congestion or problems in the future.

The operation of the courts of Kansas involves the expenditure of great sums of money. The judicial salaries alone in Kansas exceed a million dollars—a year. When we consider the salaries paid to clerks and deputy clerks and bailiffs and probation officers and court reporters and when we consider the expenditures for law books, supplies, and office equipment, it is quite obvious that the Kansas court system is big business in a real sense.

Certainly any private business of the magnitude of the courts of Kansas which attempted to compete in the modern business world without these common tools of business managements which have just been mentioned would not be in business very long. We must conclude that the Kansas court system is not operated in a business—like way with non judicial duties performed by a competent administrative staff.

9. DOES THE KANSAS COURT ORGANIZATION PROVIDE PRACTICAL METHODS FOR EQUALIZING THE JUDICIAL WORKLOAD?

The resource book of the conference contains much factual information which clearly demonstrates that some of our judges have little work to challenge them, while others are overburdened with more cases than they can reasonably handle. For example, the October 1963 Kansas Judicial Council Bulletin shows that during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1963, the 19 judges in the four largest counties had the burden of disposing of 52% of all district court cases filed in Kansas that year. The other 38 district judges disposed of the remaining 48% of the cases. A similar disparity of work load exists beween rural districts of comparable size.

By statute the Supreme Court may assign district judges from one district to another when it is made to appear to the Supreme Court that proceedings in any district court are retarded or unduly delayed by reason of illness or absence of district judges or because of extraordinarily heavy dockets.

This statute is authority for our Supreme Court to use more effectively our judicial manpower by assignment of district judges to areas of congestion. During the ten year period ending June 30, 1964, in only one instance was a district judge assigned to another district to assist in relieving the congestion of an extraordinarily heavy docket. Assignments were made, however, on many other occasions because of the illness, absence or disqualification of another judge.

In citing these statistics I do so, not in criticism of the Kansas Supreme Court, but simply to demonstrate that in Kansas because of the present case load placed upon our Supreme Court and because of the lack of administrative assistance, it is for all practical purposes impossible for the Chief Justice and the other members of the Supreme Court to attend to the day to day details involved in keeping track of case congestion in the various trial courts.

It should also be pointed out there is not statutory authority at all to permit the shifting of judges of our courts of limited jurisdiction from county to county to relieve case congestion in those courts.

Hence we will have to conclude that the Kansas court organization does not pro-

10. IN KANSAS ARE THE COURTS PROVIDED WITH SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE RULES OF PROCEDURE?

Since January 1, 1964, Kansas has had a new code of civil procedure designed to encourage advance trial preparation and to eliminate the element of surprise. Our courts now have the procedural tools to facilitate the ascertainment of the truth and to reduce the expense of litigation.

This new code permits the liberal taking of depositions of witnesses before trial and the use of other procedures to compel complete disclosure of the facts. In the area of court rules of civil procedure, Kansas has truly entered the space age and in this area our system cannot be found wanting.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion let us remember in our discussions in this conference that justice, like religion and democracy, is not automatic. Lawyers and judges alone cannot give Kansas the reform we must have in our judicial system which has failed to measure up to the demands of a modern society.

We have asked you as distinguished citizens of Kansas to explore with us the dimensions of a challenging task. With your help perhaps in the future the Kansas people may truly be served by a modern court system providing more effective justice.