IN HOUSE COMMITTEE

Death Penalty Foes Lose

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A House committee voted 13-2 against efforts to do away with Louisiana's death penalty, rejecting arguments that it is a cruel, unfairly administered punishment.

In arguing for his repeal measures, Monroe Rep. Charles Jones likened executions to state-sanctioned murder. Joseph Sheley, a criminologist representing Louisiana's chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said "a very complicated form of racism" comes into play when a murder case is being investigated and tried.

"Study after study shows that blacks who have killed whites are far more likely to receive the death penalty than whites who kill blacks or people who kill members of their own race," Sheley said.

But Criminal Justice Committee members were unmoved by testimony from Jones and representatives of several religious and civil rights groups who said the death penalty is unfairly administered and is morally wrong.

Rep. Ed Scogin of Slidell, noting that Jones's backers often referred to the Bible in arguing against executions, also quoted some scripture.

"'As you sow, so also shall you reap.' That's what it says in the one I read," Scogin said.

Scogin also downplayed arguments that racial discrimination comes into play in the imposition of the death penalty. "I'm sure you all know that eleven of the last 15 executions in this nation were non-blacks," he said.

Among the religious leaders opposing the death penalty were Bishop Stanley Ott of the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge and the Rev. Reginald Pitcher, who gave