

### *Capital Punishment*

of years, after the effective abolition of capital punishment here. I will not suggest that if capital punishment were reintroduced the murder rate would rise again; there are slight fluctuations from year to year. I suspect that there is in fact no relationship in terms of deterrence and the actual murder rate with capital punishment.

The Hon. Member who introduced the Bill spoke of the popularity of capital punishment in the general population. I will concede that a majority of Canadians at the present time would like capital punishment to be reinstated, at least for some purposes. However, I happen to be a sociologist, and a criminologist in fact, and I have done a little bit of work on this subject. In a book that I published: "*The Sociology of Law and Order*", I reported results from a survey in which I not only asked "Would you like to have the penalty of capital punishment?" but, as well, "If so, for what kinds of offences and what kinds of circumstances?" I found that support for capital punishment was highly qualified. People said that they only wanted it for mass murderers, multiple murderers, or cases where there could be no mistake because there were actually eye witnesses, or in situations of child abuse; in other words, extremely rare situations in terms of the crime committed and the witnesses to it, conditions which would almost never obtain.

I believe that when people indicate that they still want punishment, they really want a symbol on the books. They want to demonstrate that murder is really a heinous crime and that capital punishment is the sort of sentence which would be appropriate for it. They do not really want to see executioners back in business.

I understand the need for symbols, but I would like to suggest that this could be a very poor symbol. Symbols could have effects that we do not want. Bringing back capital punishment could give people a false sense of security. It could give the appearance of something being done to give them better protection against violence than, in fact, would be the case.

When we think of capital punishment and murder, we are, of course, focusing on an individual criminal. We have all been raised in terms of personal morality. It is easier to see a wicked person than to think of wickedness and evil in terms of corporations and generalities in institutions. Our stereotype of the criminal is of a wicked-looking deviant, an evil-looking person. If we lock him up and throw away the key or kill this person, we have a sense of security that something is better.

However, murder is in fact very infrequent in Canada. We are not a violent society. People who watch too much American television are left with the impression that there is far more murder than is actually the case, especially elderly people, who are far too often presented on television as being victims of crime. This gives them the impression that they are in great danger when, in fact, they are not. We are much more likely to be killed in a car accident, in a fire or because of bad working conditions. Here the time span is such that people do not realize they are being killed by hazardous conditions at

work or where they live. We are much more likely to be killed by the unintended effects of corporate decisions than by premeditated murder. The culprit here is not a wicked person, but, rather, a negligent corporation, or a municipality or provincial or federal Government which licenses, permits, or, in the case of Crown corporations, actively perpetrates bad working conditions, such as pollutants, or low level radioactivity. There are many situations which cause long-term cancers in large numbers of people, such as pollutants in drinking water, in the air, the general conditions around us. There is no evil-looking crook here but the glossy pages of annual reports of corporations and smiling Cabinet Ministers saying that all is well.

#### [Translation]

There is no easy remedy for violence, but I am confident we can at least reduce the rate of violence, if we cannot eliminate it altogether. In fact, crime was worse in the 19th century, but further improvement can be expected only if we tackle the causes of violence.

Violence against women will be reduced as soon as women are respected in our society and accepted as equal partners. Meanwhile, we can improve the investigation procedures used by police in so-called domestic conflicts. We need research and experimentation, and the results of new procedures must be analyzed. Psychologists advise using the principles of negotiation in family conflicts and elsewhere. These procedures can be taught to young people. We should carry out experiments in resolving conflicts in our schools and with young people convicted of violent crimes.

We must seek out the best way of rehabilitating offenders and criminals. Recently, remarkable results were obtained in federal prisons through the use of post-secondary education. And then the Solicitor General dropped this program, which had the best record in the country! I feel this experiment should be continued and extended to other programs, instead of cutting the program.

It is generally agreed that there is a direct relationship between alcoholism and drinking, and the murder rate. However, in our society, the consumption of alcohol is encouraged by the advertising media. Prohibition is impossible without creating a black market, but we should not encourage consumption through advertising.

Hard-core pornography actually encourages violence, especially towards women and children. Nevertheless, the federal Government has now given licences to pay television companies for broadcasting pornography. I say we should put a stop to hard-core pornography. That would be better than building new prisons for violent criminals. What does the Progressive Conservative Party intend to do about this? They would rather talk about capital punishment for murder instead of preventing murders. Did the Progressive Conservatives support my proposal for introducing measures to control pornography on pay TV? Are they against the causes of violence? No, they are not.