

Criminal Code

treated me like a father". I said, "Do not carry that too far". In any event, he occupies a worth-while position in this country today.

Murderers are not the most dangerous people to custodial and police officers. The most dangerous so far as they are concerned are the mentally afflicted who have been imprisoned for life. We do not hang them even though they are of great and ever-increasing danger to the custodial officers.

I think a life sentence should be at least 20 years imprisonment and that no person should be pardoned or have his sentence commuted until he has served whatever term is believed to be appropriate. If we adopt that attitude I think we will meet with those who have, as honestly as I, expressed the contrary opinion. I am asking the house to give this suggestion a trial. The authorities in Britain do not act in the administration of justice without their eyes wide open. The method of abolishing capital punishment and setting a minimum time for a life sentence is becoming the trend.

In common with every member of the house, as I have already said, I hate the odious, contemptible and awful crime of murder. My feeling toward capital punishment, on the basis of many years' experience at the bar and as a result of having occupied the position as head of the government with the awful responsibility that rests on government in the exercise of mercy, compels me to the view that the bill introduced by these four hon. members deserves the support of this house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. John R. Matheson (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that if we think we are sitting in judgment on capital punishment we are deluding ourselves. Social and moral progress, symbolized by this resolution, are standing in judgment on each member of this twenty seventh parliament. As the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has expressed so eloquently on March 28, the ultimate decision must be made by each one of us in the loneliness of his own conscience.

I deem it a privilege to follow the address we have just heard by the right hon. gentleman who expressed his views, the result of many years of keen, devoted interest to this important subject. He made reference to a quotation from John Donne:

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.

We can currently pick up a book entitled "The Phenomenon of Man" written by Teilhard de Chardin, wherein he speaks of man's feeling for society and social equality. He says in his book:

For love to be possible there must be co-existence.

We belong to the caring generation. We cannot discuss capital punishment in the impersonal or abstract, for in the impersonal and abstract love dies.

That is why I cannot understand the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) who asks, "What is civilization?—I cannot find it in my heart to equate the abolition of capital punishment with such things as the discovery of America or the invention of the wheel". Nor can I agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Woolliams), who in the course of an address referred to capital punishment as "a lighthouse on a rock". Personally, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this analogy will prove acceptable to our generation of young Canadians.

• (5:00 p.m.)

As the right hon. gentleman said when summarizing many of the points that were so ably presented in the course of this debate, society has gone a long way. In the past society tried to correct many of its ills by killing off certain of its members. This is the action of the animal kingdom, the natural reaction to a threat. It is a stage in evolution which we see, hopefully, drawing to a close. In the stage of evolution we are entering we attack root causes—I think this was the burden of the conclusion of the right hon. gentleman's address—not the victims of social ills. That, I think, is the real significance of this debate.

It is a fact that as late as 1786, in front of Newgate prison with 20,000 spectators, Phoebe Harris was burned. In 1777 a 14-year old girl was burned for hiding some whitewashed farthings at the instigation of her master. James Cook, a 24-year old bookbinder, was gibbeted in 1832 at Leicester with 32,000 people witnessing his execution. If you look at some of the paragraphs of Blackstone's Commentary you will find that the great Coke—and any lawyer in this chamber will respect his authority—at that time approved, with many appropriate Biblical quotations, the processes of execution for high treason, drawing to the gallows, hanging by the neck, cutting down alive, removal of the bowels, burning of the bowels in the live presence of