

replaced by something more humane. There are those who say that there are no humane ways of killing people, and perhaps this is true. But, again, public opinion seems to demand that hanging be replaced by something else, possibly the electric chair or the gas chamber. If this bill does fail to carry, I hope the government will immediately examine alternative means of carrying out capital punishment for a very small proportion of murderers, those responsible for perhaps 1 or 2 per cent of the murders currently committed in Canada.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, may I commence by saying that I find a lot of wisdom in the remarks of the speaker who preceded me, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis). Since the bill has not yet passed third reading, we do not know at this moment whether or not there will be abolition of the death penalty in Canada. Nevertheless, I think we have to conclude that hanging is not the right method of execution, if execution be the result of the vote in the House. I do not think it takes any wisdom at all to realize that if the people who collect dogs in our streets were to hang them in the dog pound, the SPCA would soon be after them. So, obviously, hanging is not the proper method to use. I am not a happy hanger, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I think this issue can be examined from many different perspectives. We can examine statistics and various data, but I think it should be put on record in this debate that most of the data we are given are irrelevant. Such information it is meaningless in that it bears no relationship to this particular issue.

The Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) brought forth a lot of statistical analyses dealing with capital punishment, but I would underscore the fact that such data are unimportant except if they can demonstrate valid correlation. When doing experiments or conducting research work, one soon comes to realize that data become meaningful only when the two given factors of comparison remain the same or one of them is controlled. If dependent or independent variables are controlled, you can get meaningful data. I think that the only meaningful data that are important are that the murder rate has doubled in the last decade and that there has been an increase in violent crime in this country. Those two facts are meaningful to me.

I think we must examine the way to handle this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. I take a view that is somewhat different from those I have heard speak on this subject previously. I believe that we live in the context of a cultural system in society. We do not find an individual cultural system defined in our law books, and often it is not very clearly defined at all. For example, in Egypt we know people stand much closer together when in social conversation than they do in North American countries. In Greece and Italy people practice a lot of touching, whereas we tend to be much more distant in our culture. Under our cultural system in North America we practice the concept of behaviour, punishment and reward. From its abolitionist position it appears that the government has looked at behaviour in society and said that it does not like what is happening, but it is focusing entirely upon the issue of capital punishment.

I, too, do not feel happy about people killing one another, Mr. Speaker. Whether the practices of the last 5,000 years have been right or wrong, I feel that society is focusing

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more on punishment and is not doing nearly enough to focus on the behaviour of human beings, both individually and collectively, in our society today. If we look at this bill and at the whole complex pattern of behaviour, reward and punishment, we will find that we can in fact begin to do some of those things within society's obligation to decrease the rate of crime.

● (1640)

Another point I should like to bring out is that many of the people who argue in favour of the abolitionist stand do so on the principle that there is a higher ethic in a society that takes this stand. I would challenge that idea. Where is the higher ethic if you legislate into law an abolitionist state at a time when the vast majority of people want to retain capital punishment? I suggest you achieve no higher ethic in this way. You achieve no higher ethic when you have people who wish to retain capital punishment and you legislate abolition because of some legal policy on capital punishment. This in no way increases the ethic in society.

The focus, then, of this whole question of capital punishment ought to be along these lines: if there is to be an abolitionist state, the government must earn the right to that state. It must consider the factors which affect the behaviour of human beings in order that we can decrease stresses in our society, and by decreasing those stresses, hopefully we can then decrease the amount of violent crime. We should follow the formula that a decrease in violent crime takes place as you increase the assurance of comfort for the people in society in order that they become more and more willing to adopt a position of abolition.

Just to list some of the approaches we could be taking, to focus not on the punishment end of the question but on the behavioural end, something ought to be done about violent shows on television, something ought to be done about violence in sports, and some action obviously needs to be taken in relation to our child abuse laws. We must focus more attention on proper nutrition in this country. We can demonstrate much more clearly than in respect of other data put forward that many violent crimes take place because of poor nutrition. Something has to be done to ensure that Canadians have a proper diet.

We must do something about the state of the economy. It will come back later to some data in that regard. This government can certainly take the blame for increased violent crime in this country as a result of the way it has messed up our economy. We can see a correlation between an increase in crime and a slump in the economy. We can also see a correlation between an increase in crime and lack of work—and the government's record in this regard is not very good. It can also be pointed out that there is an effect as a result of architectural design, the design of our cities and an increase in noise levels. These all have an effect on society and they all tend to lead to an increase in violent crime. We can talk about the policies of the government as they relate to drugs and alcohol, and the list goes on and on.

Children today, as they grow up in Canadian society, have in many ways been deprived of the notion of creative play. What happens in our society today is that every child is organized. He is not only organized but is organized to