

An eye for an eye

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In support of this claim, the study reports that "when studies in nine different states were grouped, it was found that of 1,293 first degree murder parolees, only 21 violated their paroles. Only nine of them were convicted of a second felony, and only one of a second murder."

And "statistics and surveys firmly establish that murderers not executed are no substantial threat to the security of the public — scarcely a threat at all in comparison to those convicted of lesser crimes which no one advocates be punished with death", the report continues.

FEW BREAK PAROLE

The question which will now be brought up, is of course: "What of prison guards?"

"If there was no supreme penalty, life as a prison guard would be intolerable. Conversely, as a prisoner, life in prison would be one of terror and strict security would be routine."

However Dahn Batchelor, a student of criminology at the University of Toronto, answered his own question by saying: "By supreme penalty, I am referring to death. However, the supreme penalty could be life imprisonment in solitary confinement, a punishment more severe than death. This sentence could be meted out to a lifer who killed a guard while in custody."

But this alternative should not be considered for more than the most hopeless cases.

In a letter to the Friends Service Committee of Canada, David Lane, secretary of the home office and member of parliament for Cambridge, England pointed out: "It has never been the practice in Britain to confine all murders in prison until they die. This would in our view be unnecessary and inhumane in many cases. Moreover, one advantage of retaining the prospect of parole for a life sentence prisoner, even more than for other prisoners is that it is an incentive to good behavior."

PAROLE INCENTIVE

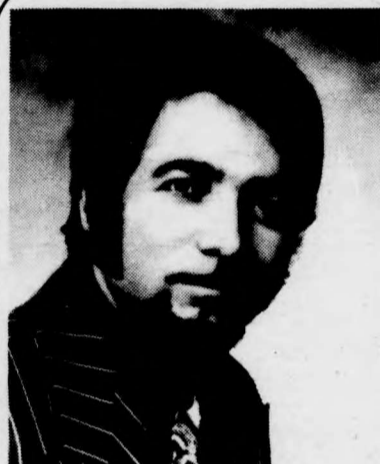
Vengeance is probably the final argument for capital punishment but most people would tend to dismiss it as purely barbaric.

Admittedly the desire to take an eye for an eye has deep, unconscious roots and is roused when we feel strong indictive impulses to be legally sanctioned by society.

As George Bernard Shaw once said: "Murder and capital punishment are not opposites that cancel one another, but similars that breed their kind."

Our members of parliament should not be allowed to rule that there are pragmatic ends to be served by killing other people.

1. The Case Against Capital Punishment, The Washington Research Project, in 1971.



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