

Capital Punishment

murderer's upbringing, social disadvantage, childhood abandonment, emotional malformation.

God lifts this entire development out of our hands and lifts it up where God can infuse it with mercy and correction and healing.

To say that the death of Jesus is sufficient doesn't mean that no place for punishment remains. Indeed, everyone, whom God loves, God disciplines. (Hebrews 12:6) Certainly it is appropriate for Christians to insist on punishment, as long as the nature of such punishment is disciplinary and aims at restoration of the murderer.

There, of course, in the suggestion of restoration and redemption, is the ultimate Christian motive for refusing to cut short a life even when it is that of a murderer who has committed a heinous crime.

● (2040)

As a profound statement from Christian theology, a theology to which I think the evangelical can respond as easily as those he would regard as liberal in his theology, this seems to me to be a sound basis for taking the political stand I do.

What should we be doing, then? It is clear from a public opinion poll published just in the last days that Canadians do not like hanging very much. In fact, very, very few support that as the form of capital punishment. We find also a declining number of Canadians are actually in support of capital punishment. My expectation is that if this national debate, which has been going on for some time now in the media as well as in the House of Commons, continues, we will actually reach a 50-50 position in the country, half of the people on each side of the question and if you will, a normal distribution statistically. And, of course, as far as opinion is concerned, how would one choose on that basis?

I would suggest that recognizing the factors that are at work in lives, to which the Reverend Victor Shepherd was alluding in suggesting that God alone knows the situation of the murderer in earlier days, we might well consider other matters on which the Canadian public has expressed itself quite strongly and ask why the Government is not taking up those matters? I focus specifically on the matter of capital punishment which has been before the Government and on which the various Parties have taken a stand, and upon which the Canadian people have expressed themselves very clearly. Child care is, I suggest, closely related to the situation in which so many people find themselves. God knows where they end up, given the kinds of situations they experience as children.

I was intrigued to see that when the special committee was touring the country, receiving representations on child care, a total of 519 of the respondents addressed the question of delivery of funds, for example, and 76 per cent called for funding to be directed to the child care service itself. On the matter of funding for-profit child care, 77 per cent were opposed to public support of for-profit programs.

On the matter of universal versus targeted accessibility, 86.5 per cent called for a universally accessible child care system. On the question of child care and its effects on children and families, no fewer than 89 per cent believe that child care

outside the family could be a positive experience for children and families. This, of course, was supported because these are the respondents addressing the special committee. But I would say that this was matched by the Goldfarb poll of 1,667 Canadians, which has also been reported in this matter, with 79 per cent of Canadians thinking that day care spaces should be ensured and 74 per cent believing that the money should be spent on the day care centres themselves. That is powerful public support. Three-quarters of the Canadian public and more support these positions.

The Government presumes to contradict that, to think that a different stance makes sense, a program that will not create the number of spaces that we need. That strikes me as an odd thing for a Government to do, a Government whose Leader in the last election campaign knuckled under to some expressions of public opinion and established this free vote process. Surely, something that is genuinely creative, something that would save lives, programs or centres that could easily reduce the number of murders, deserves action along the lines that the Canadian public want, and want in overwhelming proportions.

These seem to me to be interrelated arguments in support of the position that I intend to take. I must say that I have been studying this question, as all of us have, I suppose, at least all of us who are making speeches in the House on the matter, and I have been struck by a very different kind of effect altogether, an effect which appears in the United States when capital punishment is reinstated. Of course, there is first of all the question of deterrence to consider, not that many Members in the House are making that argument any longer. It is striking that in the United States in 1982-83 the 18 states that had no capital punishment experienced homicide rates of 5.9 per 100,000 while the 32 states that had re-established the death penalty had a homicide rate of 7.66 per 100,000. The lowest rate came in abolitionist Minnesota at 1.7; the highest was in retentionist Louisiana and Texas at 14.2.

● (2050)

Even more startling is the evidence that when capital punishment is reinstated it increases the homicide rate. We may debate the brutalizing effect of capital punishment but here we seem to have an incitement to violence, when people are aware that the state is practising the ultimate violence against the lives of murderers. We find that in Florida the first electrocution in 15 years took place in May of 1979, even though the three years preceding, 1976-78, had the lowest murder rates on record in the state, while the three years following the reinstatement, 1980-82, had the highest murder rate in the state's recent history with a 28 per cent increase in homicides in 1980. That sort of indication that people respond to violence and strike out at their neighbours seems to me to be the clinching argument for me to take the position that I do and to vote against the reinstatement of capital punishment.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I listened to my friend's very thoughtful speech. I wish to compliment him on the research that he has done and his liberal use of quotations. I wonder