

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

as often as 20 times a day on television? If those who lead the movement for abolition are really concerned about the sacredness of life they should do something about the disrespect shown for life on television programs and in movies which do so much to influence youthful minds in this country.

It appears that with a decrease in the severity of punishment for criminals there comes a corresponding increase in crime and the suffering of the innocent. In recent years, for example, the number of policemen murdered by felons has been larger than the number of felons executed by the state. It is argued that the administration of capital punishment is attended by many abuses. This may be so. The same can be said of the administration of Christian churches. Do we, therefore, eliminate the Christian churches? No, we try to eliminate the abuse. The same approach applies to the abuses of capital punishment.

Abolitionists make much of the loss of innocent lives through the death penalty. They overlook the fact, however, that more innocent lives have been lost through non-executed criminals who remained alive to commit more crimes than through executed non-criminals.

It has been said that the science of penology as well as the improvements in standards of social work and law enforcement have advanced to the point where society is protected to a greater extent than by the imposition of capital punishment. It is true that we have more effective police forces and more thorough rehabilitation of criminals. However, of the 14 states in the United States which abolished capital punishment prior to 1962, eight have reinstated it. Penology does give more protection now than formerly against criminals committing crimes in the future, but it cannot protect against persons committing crime in the first instance.

Every one of us, Mr. Speaker, still reflects the image of God. To murder a man is still an outrage, an outrage against God the Creator, against man, against the victim, against the victim's loved ones, against society and against the institution of government. Because life is sacred, life must be protected against maltreatment and murder. Policemen charged with enforcing the laws of the state must have the right to kill in self-defence or in the interest of law enforcement. The state must punish severely, at times with death, those who wilfully disregard the sacredness of the lives of others. I believe this is necessary for the general good of society.

[Mr. Thompson.]

Mr. John R. Matheson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if I were to speak from the heart on this subject I would say that the appeal of the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) with respect to reverence for life is the paramount consideration in this whole question. It seems to me that while there may be a certain nobility about clashes between men which result even in death, such as in boxing, sports and in battle, the ritual whereby the state collectively, behind shutters, hidden from the public, snuffs out the life of even the meanest of its citizens is hardly—

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, might I point out that the press is always present at executions. That is required by law.

Mr. Matheson: I will be pleased to answer any questions—

Mr. Cowan: Don't make false statements.

Mr. Matheson: I am prepared to support the proposition that the institution of hanging has tended to become over a period of years an almost secret ceremony, one of which society itself is ashamed.

Now in assessing this question of capital punishment, allow me to speak from the head and not from the heart, I think we are compelled to look back a few centuries to see just what has been involved in this ancient cult. A partial inventory of methods of capital punishment includes burning at the stake, boiling in oil, boiling in water, the iron coffin, burying alive, breaking on the wheel, drawing and quartering, decapitation, impaling, hanging, crushing, flaying, shooting, exposure to insects, poisoning, throwing to animals, stoning, drowning, torturing, electrocution, asphyxiation. All these methods were ingeniously varied, and all at certain times in society were vigorously defended, even indeed by men of the church. Maiming, such as the amputation of one or both legs, was often the preferred means of punishment.

The hon. member for Chapleau (Mr. La-prise) in his thoughtful and sincere address asked rhetorically whether we are now civilized enough to accept abolition of the death penalty. It appears to me that if we examine the institution of capital punishment over the years we find a steady trend, a movement that is quite unmistakable. This theory has been developed by Dr. Frank E. Hartung, a Ph.D. from Michigan and a sociologist who has written a number of important books on the subject. He says that trends in the use of