

I suggest that we shall try in committee to have the death penalty abolished. I think that we shall try first to have the government's proposal rejected, but on third reading we shall have to abstain from voting because we cannot acknowledge—I do not know whether other hon. members will agree with me—the right of people to dispose of the life of convicts. I submit there are other means in 1973 to deal with criminals and prevent them from causing any harm to the public.

[English]

Mr. Ian Arrol (York East): Mr. Speaker, this is a strange age in which we live. The doers of society, those who pay their taxes and do their jobs, those who are members of ratepayers' associations, those who collect for the heart fund and cancer society, those who work in church groups, those who are active in service clubs, those who personally help those in need are increasingly held up to derision and ridicule, while the whiners and social delinquents are presented as the pure gems of society. The lost, the social orphans, the nuts and fruits of society, at least as generally depicted by the movies, newspapers, magazines, radio and television have become the heroes.

The more a man spits on society, the more society coddles him. If someone is lazy, we are to blame, of course. If someone is a thief, society is at fault. If the man of the house spends all his money on booze, then shame on society for driving him to drink. If someone is a rapist and murderer, why, society allowed the terrible environment which produced him. It has got so now that a person who defecates on the floor blames society for not cleaning it up. Sure enough, such characters will be hailed as heroes of the common people in some feature article in the daily press or in some documentary on the CBC.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Arrol: The indolent, the far-out, the emotional blackmailers are pampered by sociologists, psychologists and psychiatrists, many of them as mad as the people they serve. Evil, it seems, no longer exists. Modern educationalists and left-wing groups romanticize the sick and the sorry in our society. If only we understood, they say.

What should be understood is that if there is no evil person in the world, it must follow that there is no good person. If we cannot blame individuals for their conduct, we cannot praise individuals for their achievements. This, of course, is nonsense. The fact of the matter, and it is the basic assumption to which I adhere in my remarks on the need for the reinstatement of capital punishment, is that there are incorrigibles in society. If a man's life has been one of violent, aggressive, anti-social activity, and if his career in crime culminates in the murder of an innocent person in society, that social misfit should be done away with; indeed, for his own benefit as well as that of the society he has rejected.

• (1550)

The majority of people in our nation feel it is our right and duty to go to war against outside aggressors and in the process, perhaps, kill thousands of the innocent as well as those who might be called the guilty in order to preserve the society we defend. Then why, when the enemy is inside the country and is fairly tried and judged

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to be the guilty one, should not society protect itself from such a one? Even if capital punishment does not act as a general deterrent, capital punishment certainly prevents the person who kills from ever murdering again.

That which is barbaric about capital punishment is not that society feels it has to remove the guilty one but the way in which the guilty one is removed. In this modern scientific age there are alternatives to hanging. If hanging is repugnant, then let us be merciful in the way in which the person is brought to death. Let him not suffer the cruelty of a lifelong sentence, or even 25 years, in prison. Let us close the book of life for the transgressor quickly, cleanly and finally. But let there be no mistake that a society, in order to maintain law and order, must provide both for rewards and punishment.

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, on this first occasion upon which I have risen formally to take part in a debate in this House I should like to begin by extending congratulations to Your Honour and to your deputy upon your election to the high offices you now hold.

I rise to take part in this debate, not so much because I believe my contribution will match any of the great speeches we have heard so far but because I feel I have a contribution to make which goes far beyond the question whether capital punishment ought to be imposed or not. I wish to consider the circumstances which lead people into committing capital crimes.

I remember as a child my parents telling me a fable from Aesop about a contest between the sun and the wind to see which could make a man take his coat off first. The wind blew as hard as it could but the only result was to make the man clasp his coat more tightly about him. After the wind had expended its efforts, the man still had his coat on. Then the sun had its turn. It came out in all its glory, and in a very short time the man shed his coat. For too long, as it were, we have tried to use the force of the wind to eliminate crime, rather than turning light on the topic.

I have heard expressed in this House and in my constituency arguments for and against deterrence; I have heard arguments for and against rehabilitation; I have heard arguments on the basis of divine instruction. And, Mr. Speaker, I have even heard arguments based on cost to the taxpayer. But in my view, when we are considering the crime of murder we should become much more curious about the conditions under which such a crime is committed and the nature of the criminals themselves. If we could prevent crime being committed, it seems to me we would be serving a much greater purpose in the long run than we would be by eliminating a criminal by means of a rope or a gas chamber.

In a detailed study of crime in Canada between March 31, 1964, and March 31, 1965, the following figures appear. I picked this particular year because the profile seems to be more complete. In that year, 3,621 offenders were admitted to penitentiaries. Most of them were under 30 years of age and 2,400 of them, or 67 per cent, were unemployed when their crimes were committed. Seventy-five per cent of those who were unemployed, or 1,800, had one or more dependants.