

EDITORIAL

Bundy's execution in Florida this week has once again brought capital punishment into the news. But this time we weren't shown the usual placard bearing protestors outside the penitentiary where the execution was taking place, but instead we saw relatives and friends of the killers victims popping champagne bottles at the news of Bundy's death and heard of a local D.J. encouraging people to turn off appliances so that they'd get more juice for the chair.

This week also saw the occurrence of a particularly distasteful crime here in Fredericton; a young girl was raped on her way to school. I've noticed that when people discussed the incident it wasn't uncommon to hear statements like "they should hang the bastard" and "he deserves the death penalty", not to mention some pretty grim suggestions as to the fate of the pervert's genitalia. People appear to be quite willing to endorse the death penalty for particularly heinous crimes, especially when it's close to home. Indeed, polls taken when the issue was being debated in Parliament suggested that a majority of Canadians were in favour of capital punishment for certain crimes, even though MP's didn't like the idea.

Personally, I agree with the death penalty in certain instances but, like many others I'm sure, I have doubts regarding our justice system's ability to administer it. What if you execute the wrong person? The experience of Donald Marshall, a Nova Scotia man who spent years in person for a crime he didn't commit, is an example of the fallibility of our justice system.

Obviously, if the death penalty were implemented, you would only apply it in cases where the evidence was overwhelming, but isn't that also the current requirement for a life sentence? Mistakes have been made there before and probably will again.

No system is perfect, but a legal system should be damn close to it before it is given the right to pass such a final judgement. Hopefully ours is striving to such a level of competence so as to be able to make such decisions, whether or not it ever actually gets the power to do so.

Stephane Comeau



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The Brunswickan

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