

Criminal Code

Mr. Erik Kampmann, representing the Danish government, told the select committee:

The number of murders decreased since the virtual abolition of the death penalty.

In Holland capital punishment was abolished by law in 1870. Today the homicide rate of that country is the lowest on the continent of Europe. Representing his government, Sir Simon Van Der Aa was a witness before this committee. He stated that, following abolition, criminal statistics continue to show no tendency of increase in crimes for which, in lieu of the death penalty, lifelong imprisonment may be imposed.

In Norway there have been no executions since 1875—that is, there had not been up until the end of the war when some collaborators were executed. According to official statistics, the annual murder rate per 100,000 has been as follows:

Year	Rate
1869-1878 .....	.14
1879-1888 .....	.12
1889-1898 .....	.12
1899-1904 .....	.08
1905-1924 .....	.05

In other words, following abolition the murder rate has dropped consistently. The Norwegian memorandum to the British government has this to say:

The experience gained has strengthened the view that abolition of capital punishment has not caused any increase in the number of murders.

In Sweden the death penalty was abolished in 1921, although the last execution took place in 1910. In a report to the committee the chief of Swedish penitentiaries had this to say:

The final abolition of the penalty so far from leading to an increase in offences of this kind was actually followed by a noticeable decrease in crimes legally punished by death.

The actual homicide rate per 100,000 population in Sweden has been as follows:

Year	Rate
1905-1913 .....	.86
1914-1916 .....	.72
1920-1932 .....	.52
1933-1938 .....	.46
1939-1942 .....	.47

Mr. Speaker, one could go on to show that the representative of every country who appeared before that select British committee gave evidence that the murder rate, if not remaining stationary, actually went down after the abolition of capital punishment. I suggest to this house that those countries are very similar in nature to our own, and that we could profit from their experience.

There is one final reason why I do not believe that hanging is a deterrent to crime. Most murders take place in moments of great

[Mr. Thatcher.]

passion, caused by rage, fear, jealousy, drink, insanity or something of that nature. At the time the murder is committed, the murderer is usually so blinded by his passion of the moment and his unreasoning fury, that no thought of future punishment enters his mind until later. I say that over these influences no deterrent can have very great effect. No matter how hon. members may wish to approach this problem, I think it is almost impossible for anyone to prove that the death penalty is a deterrent to murder.

I conclude by saying that the real security for human life is to be found in a reverence for it. If the law regards life as inviolable, then people may begin to regard it in that light. I therefore commend this bill to the consideration of the house.

Mr. T. H. Goode (Burnaby-Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have had some discussion with the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Thatcher) with regard to this bill. I think he is to be complimented for bringing the matter again to the attention of this house. It is my opinion that the hon. member is entirely sincere in what he says. For that reason, whether we agree with him or whether we do not, I think we should express our opinions on this matter in the house.

In Burnaby we happen to be so unfortunate as to have the Oakalla prison farm. We want to get rid of it. We hope that the government of British Columbia, when they get around to getting something done, will move Oakalla from my constituency; but until that time comes it will remain there. All the hangings that take place in British Columbia, or the majority of them, take place at Oakalla, usually a few moments after midnight.

I visit that prison farm quite often, having some interest in some of the inmates there with regard to their future after they leave that farm. For the last four or five years I have had occasion to see some of these lads in the death cells. I have also had occasion to watch the construction of the gallows in the prison yard at Oakalla and sometimes inside the building. Those people who seem to think that hanging is a deterrent to capital crime because of the fact that it teaches a lesson to other men or women who might be of the opinion that a murder comes in their future, could take a lesson from the officials of a prison farm such as Oakalla.

I remember one time—not too long ago—when I was in the prison farm about three o'clock in the afternoon. The hammers were ringing on the scaffold. The place had such a deathly calm that you could have heard the proverbial pin drop anywhere in the yard, and it could be said that it was having an