

Capital Punishment

crimes has multiplied astronomically. Later I will give some proof of that and the reasons for it. The crimes of theft, murder, rape, particularly drug related crimes, parenting of unwanted children and a number of lesser problems of family decay, have all been initiated with the coming of the "just society" and the advent of the Trudeau government.

Just as humans in society must account for their actions, governments also must account for theirs. I charge here today that the government of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has perpetrated a major crime against Canadian society. Be that as it may, if in its wisdom a government chooses to disregard the wishes of the majority, that government at least has the responsibility to persuade public opinion to accept that wisdom which contradicts the views of the majority. It is not only a responsibility but an obligation.

In the case of abolition of the death penalty, the Liberal government has suppressed public debate. Instead of using the power of public persuasion to convince people that the Liberal caucus is right and over 80 per cent of Canadians are wrong, this government hides behind cabinet decrees and denies the opportunity to Canadians within their democratic institutions to discuss this important subject. I will come to these statistics and to the evidence upon which I charge this government and the Solicitor General of being intellectually dishonest with Canadians. I can produce the facts to prove that.

Getting back to the democratic accountability aspect for a moment, we have all sent out questionnaires. My questionnaire produced several thousand returns and indicated that over 86 per cent of the people in my constituency favour a return to capital punishment in cases of premeditated murder in the first degree. That statistic is reflected in all constituencies across Canada of which I am aware. Where is the democratic accountability or at least the responsibility to persuade public opinion to conform to the wisdom that the government follows on capital punishment? I have always taken the position on this question that privately I hate to see us dispensing with human life as a means of punishment. But on the moral question, we owe society a moral obligation to do what is right, for the whole population, not merely the murderers.

I now want to give some statistics to which the Solicitor General and the government never refer. They were obtained from historical statistics of Canada and show the incidence of murder for the census years 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951 and 1961, and how that ties in with current murder statistics. In 1921 there were 77 murders in Canada. There were 49 in 1931, 40 in 1941, and 52 in 1951. By 1961, with a doubling of the population, there were only 172 instances of first degree murder in Canada.

The rate of murder per 100,000 population all through the twenties, thirties, forties and fifties was less than one murder per 100,000. In fact, the murder incidence rate was .5 in 1931, .4 in 1941, .35 in 1951 and, as my colleague noted earlier, .94 in 1961. With the coming of the "just society" and the Trudeau era, the rate of murder in 1966 was 1.03 persons murdered per 100,000. By 1971 it had jumped to 1.66. By 1972, after the Le Dain ruling, it had jumped to 1.9 murders

per 100,000 population. After that ruling, the Prime Minister told the young people he would relax the drug laws in this country. They were going to create a whole new Liberal society and be more permissive toward our young people. However, the laws were left as tough as they were before, and so they should have been.

We tell young people they can get involved with drugs, and that the law will be changed one day. Therefore, in 1972 with 1.9 murders per 100,000, we found that many of those crimes were drug related. By 1976 the rate had increased to 2.43 and our most recent statistics show about 2.5 murders per 100,000. Crimes of murder have increased by a factor of ten to one compared with the thirties and forties. Compared with the pre-Trudeau era, murders have increased by a factor of three per 100,000.

When the Solicitor General tries to confuse Canadians by saying there have been marginal declines in the murder rate since 1976, he is dishonestly telling Canadians that the only thing that is reducing the incidence of murder is the abolition of the death penalty. That is dishonest because there are a number of other factors which have contributed to the slight reduction in the murder rate. The minister even admits as much in a letter of which I have a copy.

He says:

—it is not a nationally applicable law—or its absence—that is the primary factor in determining homicide rates—

In other words, he has admitted that it is not the absence or presence of capital punishment which is the primary factor in determining homicide rates. But in the previous paragraph of the same letter the minister alleges that the decline since 1976 is due solely to the abolition of capital punishment. He is in absolute contradiction with himself.

I contend that the implementation of gun control legislation probably has a lot more to do with the marginal decline in the incidence of murder since 1976, and it is only a marginal decline. Any significant decline did not occur until 1978. The minister can contest me on that, but it is in the statistics. The significant decline from 2.7 to 2.5 per 100,000 did not occur until after the implementation of gun control legislation.

If we want to look analytically at the statistics, we can argue that since the advent of the "just society" our moral standards in this society have been in a continual state of deterioration. It is not the abolition of the death penalty that has created the marginal improvement in the last two to three years, it is a combination of several factors. In fact, it is morally and intellectually dishonest to try and persuade the Canadian people otherwise.

Had we retained the death penalty in this country today, I would go so far as to suggest that the rate of crimes of murder might be as low as two per 100,000 or less because of the impact of gun control legislation since 1977. You cannot take the simplistic point of view and suggest that only the abolition of capital punishment influenced the statistics, as the minister implies. In that regard, he and the government are misleading Canadians. This is the reason why it is so important to have a