

*Criminal Code*

demonstrated by the way in which the motion was introduced.

The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), and indeed the leaders of all parties represented in this house have recognized the special character of this measure. Only a very small percentage of the public can possibly acquaint itself fully with the rational aspects of this issue. For the most part the uninformed will have had their minds made up, based on their personal emotions.

It is important, therefore, that all members who propose to vote on this motion listen attentively to all of the debates, and to peruse carefully all of the evidence presented by hon. members on both sides of the question. If we then do not come to the conclusion that the taking of human life under any pretext, save in self-defence, is wrong, we justify retention of capital punishment for its deterrent value or, in reality, for the natural human reaction, the love of vengeance.

Thus far my studies and research have not produced anything like conclusive evidence that fear of the death sentence is an effective deterrent to murder. Nor does the example set by carrying out the death sentence contribute significantly to the deterrence of other murders. In fact the statistical studies of Thorsten Sellin and other renowned sociologists lead one to believe that it has no deterrent value whatsoever. However, it is not my intention to argue the utility of this institution, and I will leave that to other hon. members. I am sure the statistical reviews will prove this point.

While it is oftentimes said that "vengeance is sweet," the Christian and twentieth century approach to modern penology rejects such a proposition. Indeed it should be the determination of the state and its legislators to stress the value and the sacredness of human existence.

In this regard I wish to quote very briefly from an eighteenth century radical Liberal politician, John Bright, a member of parliament for Durham who spent some time in Gladstone's Cabinet. He had this to say:

A deep reverence for human life is worth more than a thousand executions; and is, in fact, the great security of human life. The law of capital punishment, whilst pretending to support this reverence does in fact tend to destroy it.

It is my opinion that a national re-evaluation of human existence cannot help but influence international attitudes. A nation which debases the value of human life by its

[Mr. Byrne.]

extinction cannot hope to lead in the area of preventive diplomacy. In a scientific age when the mere pressing of a button might herald the complete destruction of all living creatures on this earth, we must seek to create respect for human life. Such a pursuit should be a paramount consideration for legislators and diplomats alike.

But desire for revenge is a powerful human motivation. The urge to kill, or at least to take some pleasure from the misfortune of others, is a basic human trait which this barbaric institution simply serves to abet.

Hon. members may say these strong words are unduly critical of our fellow men, but let us just take a look at some examples of human behavior which bear evidence to the truth of what I am saying. My purpose in producing such evidence is not to be critical but to show that none of us can escape these human instincts.

Psychiatrists inform us that there is often a very thin line between sanity and insanity. Many of us from time to time momentarily approach this boundary in fits of temper or other uncontrollable passions. Our official attitude therefore toward the value of human life may well condition the thinking of borderline citizens.

Is it not true that men and women, indeed even mothers, will pay fantastic sums for the privilege of obtaining ringside seats at a professional prizefight? What do they go there to see? Surely it is not entirely to watch the manly art of self defence but rather to see two human beings pummel one another, at times into insensibility and even to death.

Again, huge crowds will gather in the countryside to watch a sky diving demonstration by local acrobats. What do they go out to see? Only to thrill, I suppose, at the sight of a highly trained parachute jumper floating gracefully to earth. From whence comes the thrill at the dexterity of the trapeze artist? Is it pleasure for the deftness and the precision of such performances? No, the real thrill is derived from the knowledge that each contestant participates at the risk of life and limb.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Was there ever a sight more degrading, at least to me, than that of a mother clutching the ropes of the prize fight or wrestling ring and shouting advice to her favourite, very often with the phrase "Kill him, kill him". Was there ever a thought more disgusting