

*Capital Punishment*

themselves why so many people are calling for the restoration of the death penalty, the abolitionists continue to vilify these people. Abolitionists should ask themselves why so many good, decent, law abiding people desire a continuation of the death penalty. These people are not cruel, but they are concerned and they are demanding that their government and parliament become concerned too.

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Advocates of abolition have never claimed that public opinion is with them. They seem to be satisfied with in playing the role of an elitist minority, and speak as if the desire to retain the death penalty shows some kind of blood lust or a perverse sadism. Very few people would find much pleasure in the sight of someone being executed. The public wants protection, it does not want cruelty. Most individuals want to serve notice on the criminal element that society is prepared to defend itself. They cannot receive such assurances from the legislation presently before parliament.

Everyone knows full well that Bill C-84 is a nothing bill which will do nothing to reverse the trend towards violent crime in this country. I am opposed to this legislation, not out of a burning desire to invoke the death penalty, but because I see Bill C-84 as one more step down the road of permissiveness. The death penalty is, indeed, a subject being discussed widely these days. During the past few months the print and electronic media have been flooded with commentary on capital punishment.

One of the questions confronting Canadians everywhere, and especially those of Christian persuasion is, is it ever morally right for government to take the life of a human being who has murdered. Christians are, of course, divided on this subject, though a candid examination of the Bible shows that both the old and new testament support it. There are those, of course, who claim to have religious objections to capital punishment but avoid the practical consideration of the command "Thou shalt not kill". Thou shalt not kill is better translated as, you shall not murder. It should be clear to every thinking person that while murder is always killing, killing is not always murder. Capital punishment is killing but it is far from murder. To say thou shalt not kill as an argument against capital punishment is a flagrant misrepresentation of scripture. The Bible says society has a right to put a murderer to death. Numerous people in my riding believe that the current government is not fulfilling its moral obligation to society or its Christian obligation to God.

Naturally one has to ask just what the retention of the death penalty would do. Abolitionists would argue that abolition does not result in crime run rampant, or social peace if the death penalty is restored. They would argue that capital punishment has no deterrent value whatsoever. With that kind of an elitist argument they ignore the real issue at hand. A former Chief Justice and President of the United States, William Taft, once said:

The abolition of the death penalty is a mistake. It certainly is a deterrent for crimes of bloody violence.

In looking at the deterrent factor one must consider it as an attempt to save innocent lives in the future and not, in isolation, in relation to the fate of the guilty murderer. This very parliament considered capital punishment a suf-

ficiently effective deterrent to reserve it for the protection of policemen and prison guards during the five-year moratorium. I have never heard it said that capital punishment is no deterrent to murder. The only question anybody raises is whether it is an effective or significant deterrent. Perhaps we should look at the deterrent factor from the point of view of whether capital punishment would prevent all murders. I think not. Surely, we could not expect that any more than a 25-year sentence in prison would stop murder.

In speaking of the 25-year prison sentence, one has to seriously consider the possibility that such a law could be amended or even repealed at any time. Such a law is no guarantee that society will be protected from the criminal element. In all seriousness, I wonder how effective the 25-year sentence would be and how strictly it would be enforced. Given this government's lax track record I would suggest it would be a risky venture. In this debate one could quote reams of statistics, but he will find the common sense of most Canadians leads them to believe that the threat of the death penalty is a deterrent. It is superficial to even suggest that the threat of capital punishment has no deterrent value.

There are those who would suggest that capital punishment brutalizes society. So, however, does murder and that fact is seldom mentioned. The people of this country would not, I am sure, hesitate to say that a properly carried out execution is less brutalizing than murders reported in the press with the brutal headlines that read: Elderly couple hacked to death with axe; Four children slaughtered by prison escapee; Young woman raped and strangled; Thirteen shot in gangland rampage, and numerous others of a similar character.

It is the growing number of brutal murders that cause the obvious reaction when abolitionists pose the question, would you go and witness an execution? The answer is: Yes, but only if you will accompany the police to the bloody scene of a violent murder in which the victim was beaten, mutilated, knifed or shot. One would then ask which was the more brutal scene. A great deal of the apprehension and opposition to the death penalty is based on revulsion against the gruesome aspect of hanging. In this day and age the medical profession is capable of devising methods which are not only painless but also certain and efficient.

On April 1 I spoke in favour of having the subject of capital punishment referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs to find a more humane way of applying capital punishment. I still stand by that suggestion. I do so because of two overriding concerns: First, the majority of Canadians favour retention; and, second, many people consider hanging barbaric. Some abolitionists say it is asking too much of anyone to enforce capital punishment. I contend that the responsibilities of office carry with them the responsibility of carrying forward the administration of justice.

The death penalty represents the final right of organized society to rid itself of those who will not conform in any respect to civilized life. Such people are a minority and are not to be confused with others who might take a life in a moment of passion. There are those abolitionists who would lead people to believe that those who favour reten-

[Mr. McKenzie.]