

*Criminal Code*

generation that is growing up today. The article appeared in the *Canadian Forum* of January, 1964 and is rather aptly titled, "Murder by Television". The prophet is Marshall McLuhan. He is speaking of the difference between children who learn by reading print and those who learn by seeing television. I quote:

Print does not permit the involvement that the T.V. image demands. The confusion of these forms is indicated . . . more in the clash of attitudes toward the curriculum and the learning process. There is a great drop in motivation. The T.V. child cannot see ahead.

Then, there is a sentence here which I think is very important to the people who speak about the deterrence of capital punishment.

● (5:20 p.m.)

It is meaningless to a deeply involved person to explain that he should look ahead as a means of orienting his behaviour. Involvement, whether of the artist, the saint, or the *roué*, forbids concern with the price of groceries, or the looking ahead to envision the consequences of present action.

I think I can interpolate along with the other catalogue, "the murderer", in the list of people for whom it is impossible to look ahead to envision the consequences of present action.

Then in concluding his essay he says something which I think is particularly significant to us in this chamber this afternoon:

The effect of T.V., therefore, psychically and socially, has been as little heeded or understood as the effects of phonetic literacy and typography. Today it is absolutely necessary to understand these effects since their consequences upon our traditional ways and perceptions do not occur gradually and mechanically, but develop at electric speeds. We have a huge stake in habits of civilized detachment and analytic objectivity. In short, our civilized values are by no means the same as the new habits of total involvement of all men in all men. Such total involvement may well seem utopian to conventional, literate people. In point of fact, it has actually happened to us. We are living far ahead of our thinking. As wakeful, rational beings, responsible for a vast heritage, it behoves us to note the dissolving pressures exerted on this heritage by electric technology. Having noted this, we can make a free choice about whether or not to persist in the present patterns of technology. To ignore these patterns and pressures, by merely reacting to them, puts us in the role of automata carrying out automated mandates.

We should think very seriously about that as we examine the question, which has a great deal to do with tradition. The arguments have a great deal to do with our being rational human beings, and the response can either be one of reaction, or it can be a

logical response. We do not have to be automata in the present circumstance.

I should like to turn, Mr. Speaker, to another of the very many declarations on both sides which have dropped on my desk during these last few weeks. I turn to this one for several reasons. It contrasts, in some ways, with what I have just read, not in thought or idea but in time. It was a declaration made originally several hundred years ago and is a Christian declaration on capital punishment which was put out by the general conference of the Mennonite church. I think it speaks, for some of those people who would insist that if we take a Christian attitude toward capital punishment today there is only one attitude to take, and that is the one of very stern rebuke and retributive action, as laid out in the early chapters of the Old Testament.

The Mennonite church makes this statement of position:

Since Christ through His redemptive work has fulfilled the requirement of the death penalty, and has given the church a ministry of reconciliation, and in view of the injustice and ineffectiveness of capital punishment as a means for the achievement of the purpose of government we express our conviction that its use should be discontinued.

I have seen no other statement which has managed to combine the theological and the practical with such clarity and shortness. These people cannot be accused of being intellectuals who have no practical responsibility. They cannot be accused of being modern, because in the sixteenth century one of the charges laid against Felix Manz, the first Anabaptist martyr, was that he had rejected capital punishment. Menno Simons argued that if the transgressor should truly repent, for such a one to be hanged would look strange and unbecoming. If he remained impenitent and his life be taken, one would unmercifully rob him of the time of repentance.

Nor can these people be accused of having been soft, because the mere fact they have survived to this day and endured all sorts of persecutions is an indication that they were stern, practical and simple people.

Quite a bit more about their position has been said, but one thing they did which appealed to me was to go on beyond that statement and to include a resolution which was adopted by the 63rd session of the conference of Mennonites in Canada, held at Clearbrook, British Columbia, from July 2 to July 6, 1965. I hope that all statements emanating from those who live in that great