

Capital Punishment

south of us which have a different approach, different lifestyle and different society. We can work to protect and nurture the family unit in whatever form, because for an individual without an emotional support system, and without ties of family love, murder becomes so much more casual and without implications.

Murder becomes without implication in the sense that there is no room for grief, no sorrow and no remorse. We must put in place support systems for those too mentally ill to understand or accept the gravity of the frustration and danger they carry with them. We can do more than just react. We can prevent. We must find ways to stop violent crime before it occurs. Instead of thinking about methods of execution, we should be thinking of methods of rehabilitation.

How can our prison systems rehabilitate? How can they modify behaviour? How can they instil the sanctity of life above all else? Why instead do our prisons presently breed viciousness, bitterness and hostility? Why do they further ingrain those feelings of frustration and alienation which may have promoted crime in the first place? Why are we successfully educating those convicted of minor offences so that when they are once again free in society they can read and write and will have mastered a marketable trade and skill? Do they understand how to conform to society's wishes? Do they have an understanding of their legal rights and obligations in such a way that their earlier experiences do not land them in even more trouble? Is the answer to merely confine them for a time, only to release them into a society where they perceive crime as necessary for survival or find it the only alternative to welfare or begging?

Are we to ease them out with the appropriate and real personal skills and resources which allow them to redefine their role in society? Graham Saunders, another resident of South Gillies, wrote to me telling me that the present legal system needs massive reform. He also reminded me that the reinstatement of the death penalty should not be part of that reform. I agree. Instead of thinking, let alone planning, methods of execution, we should be thinking of ways to reform our penal system. It should do more than just enforce periods of inactivity and incarceration between bigger and more severe crimes. It should assist those who begin in a disadvantaged situation, whether through poverty or emotional deprivation, to overcome their handicaps and take their rightful and productive place in society. Instead of talking about killing to avenge, why are we not talking about helping to heal?

I have often received letters from the families of those children lost to men like Clifford Olson. They cry out for relief from the pain of their loss. Some of them see this relief coming from the murder of the Olsons of this world. I cannot change those feelings. I can empathize with their hurt, but I cannot accept their solution. There are others, however, whose children have been violently and permanently taken from them who, due to their strong Christian belief, beg for forgiveness for the guilty and reject capital punishment as a solution. Yet at the very same time in very loud voices they ask—no, they

demand—for changes that will reduce the dangers to other children and other humans in the years to come. They cry out for change. That, too, is my cause.

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Something else I would like to add comes from a constituent of mine, Mrs. Mary Richardson, who lives in Thunder Bay. She said:

A desire for revenge is indeed normal on the part of people who have been outraged by murderous acts. But let us not confuse human feelings with moral truths.

We must, as a society, work to eliminate the number of society's children who are taken from us through violent acts of other human beings. Instead of pretending to protect society from murder by institutionalizing it, we should be protecting society through a re-examination and redefinition of our justice system. Murderers, rapists and others convicted of violent crimes should not be allowed out on parole. They should not be allowed back into society until we are firmly satisfied that they understand the gravity of their wrongs and, most important, will not repeat them.

We must do more to protect society and society's keepers. One of the first steps would include a return of two person police patrols throughout this land, along with drastically increased funding for our police forces. That means a greater expenditure of tax dollars at all three levels: federal, provincial and municipal. We must put our money where our mouths have been if we truly believe in protecting our protectors. We must ensure that our prison guards are adequately trained, that there are enough of them and that they are not put in situations in which they will be weaker than those they guard. We must ensure that transition counsellors and halfway workers are not put at risk.

Celia Rygrok, the young halfway house worker recently murdered in Ottawa, should not be invoked as a reason to reinstate the death penalty. No one told the halfway house or the people who work there that the parolee who murdered her had a history of violence against women. Instead, her tragic story should eliminate a system full of cracks which allows people such as Allan Sweeney, the parolee who murdered her, to fall through.

For violent offenders, the sentences available to the judiciary and the extent to which they must be served must be, on the one hand, appropriate to the crime and, on the other hand, they must be deemed to be sufficient protection to society, especially the victim population.

Our incarceration system should have gradual levels of confinements, to return criminals to society in a supportive and watchful manner.

Mo Douglas wrote to me from Thunder Bay saying that a sentencing policy could be put into place that would "emphasize reparative rather than retributive aspects of justice, and promote responsible alternatives to the death penalty."