

### *Capital Punishment*

1979 when the electric chair was not used. The only logical conclusion which can be drawn from such studies is that there is no demonstrable evidence that capital punishment has ever actually had a significant deterrent effect on the rate of homicides, including murder.

These results dovetail with what we found in Canada. Statistics Canada reports that most victims continue to be single males who are usually killed in their own homes by someone they know, most likely a relative. Alcohol and drugs often contribute to the murder. In other words, it is a domestic type of killing. In such instances deterrence is highly unlikely to play a factor because the murder in such circumstances results from thoughtless explosions of violence, usually associated with highly agitated, passionate scenarios.

Statistics Canada also reiterated just how rare homicides are in Canada. Between 1975 and 1984 there was an average of 2.78 homicides for every 100,000 Canadians compared with 14 suicides and 20 motor vehicle deaths for every 100,000 people. If our interests truly lie in saving lives, then our best efforts should clearly be directed in pursuit of other than the re-introduction of the death penalty or capital punishment.

The argument is made that the death penalty can be used to ensure that the person or persons do not murder again. Despite the overwhelming statistical evidence that capital punishment will not lead to the reduction of the rate of murder, death penalty advocates continue to claim that it is necessary to ensure that the specific convicted murderer is permanently deterred from killing again. In other words, they do not get back into society to repeat that kind of offence.

Statistics show that this claim is absolutely false. Of 384 paroled murderers between 1970 and 1984 not one murdered again. The most recent study by the National Parole Board shows that between 1975 and 1986, 473 convicted persons were released on parole. Two murderers murdered a second time. Both of these murderers had originally been convicted of non-capital murder. Therefore, the reintroduction of the death penalty would not have had any affect whatsoever according to the National Parole Board.

No paroled murderers have been convicted of manslaughter, attempted murder or even wounding. Once again these are statistics which come from the parole board.

The simple truth is that the death penalty retentionists have no statistical evidence to support their contention that capital punishment is a deterrent to murder. Even the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, a long time advocate of capital punishment, has recently conceded that it is useless to argue for capital punishment on the basis of deterrence.

If an iron tight convincing argument cannot be made for the use of capital punishment as a deterrence, what then? I suppose it can be argued that in some cases it can be used in terms of vengeance, although I would hope that as a civilized society we have come further than the biblical adage, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth".

This leads me to my second reason for not supporting capital punishment. I think it is morally wrong. I also do not support it on religious grounds. Proponents of the death penalty believe it is morally correct to kill murderers. One usually finds that such a position is derived from either a perceived moral imperative giving the state the right to kill in order to fulfil its obligations to protect its citizens, or from the oft quoted biblical precept I mentioned earlier, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth".

Besides confirming a mixed-up argument that it is morally right to kill someone in order to demonstrate that killing someone is wrong, there is the question of whether or not the death penalty actually does what its proponents tell us it does. New executions help to convince society that violence and murder are morally wrong. However, I believe that executions lead society to the completely opposite conclusion, and in a completely wrong direction. In effect, I believe it leads society to more violence and murder.

Some experts think that some people see an execution as a prescription and not a threat. In other words, he or she would think that if the state can do this why can't I do the same thing? There is a saying that the state affects the conduct and actions of its citizens more by the standards of its own behaviour than by the penalty it inflicts on others, and I believe that to be true. There is a danger in forgetting this point and charging on with the destructive course of action vindicated only by the declaration that it is morally correct.

Indeed, to reinstate the death penalty in Canada would be to place this country in the same dubious league as such regimes as Iran, South Africa, the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that apart from the United States, Ireland and Liechtenstein, all western industrialized countries have abolished the death penalty.

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I do not believe that governments can use capital punishment as a means of protecting society. By using capital punishment to protect society, we degrade the very values that make society worth protecting. The execution of an individual is an act of violence, and as such it can never be moral in a society which supposedly abhors violence. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that violence tends to provoke further violence.

I believe it is the moral duty of the state to protect the lives of all persons within the jurisdiction of the state, without exception.

I am also opposed to capital punishment on religious grounds. It is perhaps more difficult to express one's feelings on capital punishment on religious grounds than on any other, the reason being that religious beliefs are so highly personal in nature. In making these remarks, I want it to be clear that I do not put down the points of view of others. I have Christian friends here in the House of Commons on both sides of this particular issue. The views I am about to express represent my