

Kings' debate rejects capital punishment

by Valerie Mansour

By a vote of forty-one to thirteen, those attending this year's first Kings' Debate have decided that Capital Punishment should be abolished.

The disappointingly tame debate featured four speakers, two in favor of abolishment and two against. Dr. Terry MacGrath, an economist and policy advisor to the solicitor general, and Ms. Fern Jeffries, a criminologist, voiced their feelings on why capital punishment should not exist. Joe Ross, the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Police Association, and Mr. David MacKeen, a barrister, spoke against the motion.

During his opening presentation, Dr. MacGrath stated some recent crime statistics. He informed his audience that people are not correct in assuming all crime to be on an uprise, as violent crimes have remained relatively constant.

To him, execution is not an answer to our problems because it is not erasing the crime but taking another life. Most crimes are not premeditated and he finds it unlikely that offenders would first think about whether capital punishment exists or not before committing their crime.

Dr. MacGrath also mentioned that capital punishment has not been proven as deterrent to crime by citing Spain, France and some parts of the United States. Actually, murder rates have been known to decline after capital punishment was abolished.

He concluded his argument with a reminder that capital punishment offers no help to the victim, and there is always the chance of killing innocent people.

Ms. Jeffries, when arguing for abolishment, presented the most eloquent speech of the evening. Her use of the term "the beast" and the forceful manner in which she spoke placed a greater impact on the audience than that of any other speaker.

She believes human sacrifice is not a pre-requisite for safety; that we cannot afford to approve of killing as a solution to our problems. Ms. Jeffries thinks that supporters of capital punishment have decided that offenders are subhuman.

To her, a death penalty is an offence against the law it is supposed to uphold. The sanctity of life must be our first principle.

The "beast" must be controlled by sound laws while getting its

deserved punishment.

On the opposing side, Mr. MacKeen stated that since medical science and the courts have extended life, the state also has the right to conclude it. To him, murder is the ultimate crime equal only to the ultimate penalty: death - and not life imprisonment.

He believes that the fear of punishment does work, and it is reasonable to assume that many would-be killers have stopped because of fear. Man's chief desire is to live to the end of his natural days.

Joe Ross stated that there are certain "vicious animals" that must be removed from society in some way. He does not consider himself to be a blood-thirsty retentionist, since he favors capital punishment only for those who are a menace to our security.

He used Sara Jane Moore as an example of a subject of a permissive society, and said she would not have been in court if there was capital punishment.

He stated that they do support rehabilitation, but he finds that some people cannot be helped. Mr. Ross feels that due to lack of stiff controls and protection, the country is not ready for abolition.

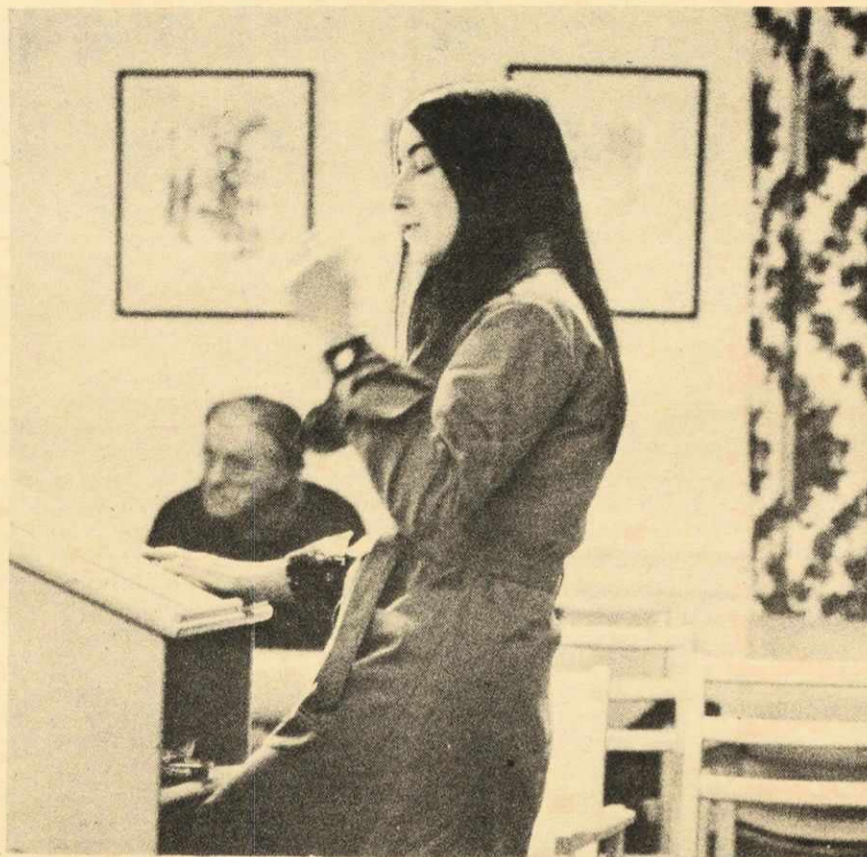
He has been refused a referendum to show how the people think. He concluded that anarchy is not far off if people cannot chose the laws they must obey.

The comments from the floor proved to be the most interesting part of the evening. Prisons were described as "psychological torture houses" which definitely are punishment, despite people's thoughts to the contrary. It was stated that the problem must be solved from the base, and not after crimes have been committed.

In his rebuttal speech, Joe Ross, warned that the police will no longer be relaxed in their approach because of the danger which now exists. His partner in the debate emphasized that society must be protected.

On the other side, the audience was told that it is not moral to kill, and just because the state has taken the right to kill these rights don't have to be exercised.

Well supported arguments on both sides do exist, but the audience indicated exactly where their support does lie by the large margin in the concluding vote.



Give it to 'em Fern!

HILLEL A.U.J.S.

presents

ISRAELI DANCE NIGHT

Mid-east Music and Dancing

SUN. FEB. 8th 8:30 p.m.

BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE

OXFORD ST. at COBURG RD.

THE 1726 ARGYLE ST.

WAREHOUSE
GENERAL STORE LTD.

JEANS
HOWICK LANDLUBBER
TOPS CORDS PIPES
LEVIS POSTERS JEANS
WRANGLER
BIG BLUE RECORDS
JEANS BAYERS ROAD SHOPPING CENTRE

THE SUBMARINE

YOU'VE TRIED THE REST HOT AND 11:00a.m.

NOW TRY THE BEST COLD SUBS 2:00a.m.

5384 INGLIS ST.

DRESDEN ARMS

MOTOR HOTEL
5530 ARTILLARY PLACE
ATTRACTIVE RATES FOR VISITING PARENTS.

D.A.'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANT
FORE'N AFTER LOUNGE

SAUNA, INDOOR POOL, and WHIRLPOOL BATH
422-1625