

Criminal Code

atom. We have gained tremendous power, but we do not know what to do with it. We are afraid of it. We have been able to prolong life, but we do not know how to deal with the problem of overpopulation and the problem of the aged. We have advanced scientifically in many fields where our philosophy has failed to keep up.

In this case, in considering what is now before us, we are advancing philosophically, knowing full well that our technology is faulty. Indeed, we do not have technology. In the field of rehabilitation, criminology and criminal reform we recognize that we are almost stupid. We have not paid attention to these fields. We have hidden preserves in penitentiaries, away from life. We have adopted an ostrich attitude, and now, when we want to move society forward we find that we know almost nothing about rehabilitation.

Is that surprising, considering that we have spent more money on shoes and boots for convicts than we have in the whole field of rehabilitation? This, then, presents a problem. What is the solution to it? Having expressed a desire to abolish capital punishment we are faced with trying to find solutions to our past negligence—negligence that we have accepted over a period of decades.

We have had recommendations such as that put forward by the hon. gentleman for Leeds (Mr. Matheson), to establish a subarctic devil's island where prisoners could be put away. Those committed there would get life sentences which could not be voided; in other words, prisoners going there should be put away for life.

In the very idea of putting them away for life sentences, from which they have no hope of freedom, we have denied that man is more than an animal, because we shall have made him an animal. A human being must have a destiny; he must have hope. Without hope he is no longer man. Otherwise, he is an animal. Therefore the abolitionists, or the quasi-abolitionists who desire to abolish the death sentence, and in its place substitute this idea of life imprisonment, substitute an idea which indeed may be worse than death.

If this resolution passes and this house indeed does abolish the death sentence, there are many alive who will rue the day that that has been done. Many who have to administer the law, such as police departments, attorneys, wardens, guards, will rue the day the death penalty is abolished. We have not

[Mr. Otto.]

convinced them any more than we have convinced ourselves that the introduction of the abolition of the death penalty is plausible. They are the ones we must convince that it is plausible, and they are the administrators of the law we are trying to introduce. Consequently they will take every precaution they think necessary to protect their lives. Within a short time we shall hear of barbaric cruelties toward inmates of prisons the like of which have not been heard of for centuries. This will happen because we are not prepared as yet to abolish the death penalty.

Having said what I have said, Mr. Speaker, I am going to vote for the abolition of the death penalty, because if it is not abolished nothing will be done in the whole field of research and criminology. With the abolition of the death penalty these problems will live with us, and the news media will remind us from time to time that we are away behind the times in this regard. They will remind us that we must put more time, more effort and more money into research with respect to criminology. We must find out why criminals become criminals. We must find out what to do about them.

I am quite sincere in my beliefs, Mr. Speaker, I have more than a haunting conviction that man is more than an animal. I must express my belief that we have reached the time when we must change our philosophy of life, and in changing develop new ideas in the whole sphere of rehabilitation so that we shall do away with this whole question of capital punishment once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I urge hon. members to vote for the abolition, without a false sense of security or pride that this will do away with all the problems. It will not do away with them. We shall have the problems of criminals; we shall have the problems of what to do with the lifers. We shall have to spend more time, more energy and more money in doing that which we have not done. We shall have to devote more energies to research, to bringing about new ideas in the sphere of rehabilitation and criminal reform.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Speaker, while I think all hon. members have given a lot of thought to this very important question of capital punishment, I have done some soul searching in an attempt to come to a decision that I can in conscience live with. Having done that, I have come to the conclusion that I cannot, in conscience, support the resolution that has been proposed.