

### *Capital Punishment*

point to the fact that governments at all levels have been terribly negligent. I have quoted my sources in that regard.

I suggest the government has not attempted at all to create the kind of environment which removes psychological stresses that have become so apparent in what is considered to be a modern, advanced technology, but a society which in many ways has cast human beings into an environment far foreign to their original heritage. I think it is because of this that we have to begin focusing our attention on reshaping the environment, and perhaps I should list these ways once again. We have to do something very significant about violence on television. These days about 50 per cent of prime time viewing involves acts of violence. We also have violence in sports. We must do something about our child abuse laws. I should like to stop at that point and put on record a quotation from the April, 1973, edition of *Psychology Today*. This is a conclusion of these two gentlemen based on research. It states:

● (2010)

• We believe that the real frustration and violence that abound in our adult society are the major sources of children's aggression. If parents are violent, then we can expect the children to be violent. Studies of the families of aggressive children consistently show that the parents of these children are inclined to be violent themselves, particularly when they punish the children.

It continues, and reaches a further conclusion:

We must begin to modify our adult society, the real adult society in which our children are being raised, if we are to reduce aggression.

I think that makes sense. Any farm kid knows that if he has a litter of puppies and if he feeds one, gives it milk and kicks the other one, it is rather obvious which one will bite him when it is one year old. In this country, though it is largely a question of provincial legislation, we have to face the question of child abuse. Particular emphasis should be given to this.

We probably have some very archaic regulations in this country in respect to child abuse. In my home province child abuse is considered to be when a child has a broken bone, lacerations to the skin, or severe bruising. Obviously a child can be severely psychologically abused. He certainly can be abused without having broken bones. I think there is a failure in this regard on behalf of governments. So, to be talking about capital punishment with the myth that somehow that will, of itself change the violent behaviour of society, is an example of irresponsibility on the part of the government because it is not looking at the whole package of the stimuli which lead to the conditioning of a society.

To focus on punishment alone when the whole system is being ignored, I think is folly. There is another thing we might say when we talk about violence or abuse. There is an interesting observation that can be made about the people depicted as being killed on television. The first is that, generally speaking, people shown as being killed on television fall into one of two categories. First there is the person who is totally unknown or scarcely introduced to the play. The ambulance comes around the corner and finds the person dead. The stories start from there. That is when the police investigation begins. So, because the person has never been introduced as a character for which there is some empathy, obviously the very act of killing becomes something that is not offensive to the viewer.

[Mr. Malone.]

The other characteristic in what happens on television is that the people who are killed are the bad guys. Of course the natural conclusion children can draw from that is that because he is the bad guy he deserves to be killed. The member opposite may chuckle, but I think an observation regarding television and how it treats the whole concept of human beings killing one another is something to which surely we must address ourselves.

If we take a look at the play *Hamlet* as it would have been treated in Shakespeare's day, the deaths in that play and in other Shakespearean plays were tragedies in the truest sense because they were of characters with whom one generally became well associated and involved. They were in the real sense tragedies.

I think there is another aspect of law and order upon which we need to focus if we are to talk about a society that increases its rate of violent behaviour, and then subsequently we might come to the position that the government has earned the right to bring in an abolitionist approach. This has to do with how we treat people who disobey the law.

One of the practices we have in our society is that, over and over again, judges in courts will let people off on their first offence on the grounds that they have only committed their first offence. The folly in that kind of thinking has to be that, in the conditioning process or learning behaviour, when people discover they can get away with something it is simply an enticement in respect of what they continue to do. In any other practice or training this is just the opposite of how one would use the concept of reward and punishment.

We would not allow a dog to steal eggs from the chicken coop, let him do it for three months, and then decide to train him otherwise. We would not let a child shoot a hockey puck through a picture windows several times, and then decide to train him otherwise. But we do this in respect of people who commit first offences, second offences, and third offences. I have done some research on this, Mr. Speaker, and I note the tremendous frequency with which people are committing very serious crimes and getting off a whole succession of times, until finally the judge realizes that that particular person has a bit of a record behind him and hands down long harsh sentences because he thinks he must protect society.

If we look at it from the opposite view, in the way one would train any other organism, the approach ought to be—and this can be documented by behavioural studies and behavioural psychology—that if you use the punishment system the punishment must come very close to the act itself, it must be short, and it should be harsh. That has been well demonstrated in the military situation. A person may be caught committing some offence. His sentence may be only 48 hours in length but it was not very comfortable. He may have had to scrub the whole gymnasium floor only to see the whole platoon walk through it with their muddy boots, and have to do it over again and then wax it. At the end of the 48 hours he sure recognizes that he does not want to be in there anymore. I would recommend that with first offences that is the approach we should take. The sentence should be short, it should be harsh but not inhumane, and the punishment should follow very quickly upon the criminal act committed.