

Capital Punishment

to remove this constant and very real threat to the well-being of those who function within the prison system in Canada.

The debate on capital punishment, Mr. Speaker, is taking place in Parliament, in coffee shops, and on the streets across this country. Whenever debate takes place on this delicate subject, it is tempting to wage a war with statistics. It seems that stats are readily available to argue both sides of the issue. As is often the case with tabulation, it is child's play to bend and shake the figures to best suit one's own need.

It has been argued that the murder rate has actually decreased during some years since capital punishment was abolished in Canada back in 1976. I would point out that during some of the years since 1976 statistics show increases as well. However, if politicians were to take a lesson from scientists seeking experimental results, we would look for confounding conditions which might have affected our results. What could account for fewer murders after capital punishment was removed? What has changed since 1976 which might skew the numbers downward?

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It is noteworthy that the world of trauma medicine has come into its own during the last decade. Many of Canada's larger urban centres have integrated trauma centres in hospitals with paramedics in the streets for the treatment of wounds causing victims to go into shock. Trauma centres are on the cutting edge of modern medicine. With the impressive efforts of those physicians and paramedics in the field, many lives are saved which would have been lost a decade ago.

Trauma medicine comes to the fore most commonly after car crashes, industrial accidents, and the like. We should consider for a moment that these same trauma specialists are constantly treating gunshot wounds, knife punctures, blast victims, and hundreds of other unspeakable afflictions. I submit that there have been fewer murders in the books during certain years because medical breakthroughs have kept more victims alive.

If we are still taking notes from our friends in the scientific field, we would look to see if attempted murders have increased, and the answer is yes. Therein lies the confounding factor in the results of our real life experiment. Heaven knows what the statistics would show if Canada had an identical medical community in place now as we did back in 1976.

Is it just a coincidence? Are we to ignore the healing effects of the air ambulance, or the use of medical anti-shock trousers commonly known as MAST, or communications which allow hospital specialists to read the vital signs of a victim miles away?

Where trauma medicine is available, patients often arrive at hospital already stabilized. Drugs have been administered at the scene, paramedics have intubated patients whose breathing was obstructed, blood shortages have been replenished, and the list goes on and on. I remind the House that such treatment

was virtually unavailable a decade ago in Canada and was used only in heavily populated areas of the United States. Fortunately it is more widespread now, but Canada is still many years behind our neighbours to the south.

The magic of medicine could very well be skewing the statistics to which we all seem to cling so dearly. I suspect that the fine men and women in trauma medicine are at least partly responsible for keeping Canada's murder rate as low as it is.

Speaking of statistics on homicides, it was mentioned earlier today that in 1962 there were 265 homicides, or they were at the rate of 1.43 every 100,000 people. In 1985 the figure was 704 or 2.78 per 100,000 people.

As the debate on capital punishment continues, the people of Canada may take little solace from recent developments in the court room. We should take, for example, the case of Louis Troalen of Quebec who was convicted of second degree murder while already serving two life sentences. According to a press account, this individual killed a fellow inmate at Archambault Penitentiary on February 4. Last July the same man shot and killed Marcel Simard of the St. Hubert Police Force and tried to kill his partner. While sitting in the prisoner's box with a guilty plea for stabbing his fellow inmate to death, Troalen raised his handcuffed hands in the shape of a gun and shouted at the investigating officer: "You're my next victim, you bastard".

A situation such as this fairly begs the question: Does this sort of human being deserve to live in our midst? Is our society safe so long as he is alive? The inmate he killed in prison most certainly was not safe. Are the prison guards who feed and supervise this man secure while in the same room? Is this society offering the investigating officer any peace of mind in the unlikely but possible event of a jail break? Just how often are we to allow an individual to kill in cold blood?

To the confirmed abolitionists I submit this: "Are you not inadvertently encouraging murder by keeping certain people alive?"

I can appreciate the abolitionist's revulsion at the taking of a human life, but so long as certain individuals remain on this earth, more lives will be taken by the habitual murderer. If human life is so valuable, how can the abolitionist justify giving such a misfit the further opportunity to take the lives of those around him?

On one of the coldest days of the year in early January 1981 I attended a funeral in Huntsville, Ontario. It was one of the biggest funerals I have ever seen. Following the church service, I walked down the steps outside, a few paces behind a coffin draped with the Canadian flag. A few days before, on January 2 to be exact, Constable Rick Verdecchia of the Huntsville Ontario Provincial Police Detachment was driving down the highway on a routine midnight shift. He pulled a car over to the side of the road and approached from the rear. He probably never heard the shot which killed him.