

Criminal Code

people who have lived in slums have become useful citizens and professional people. They have become leaders in the social field, they have even become leaders in politics, they have become leaders in commerce.

In my opinion environment is not the basic cause or the answer but rather there is something in the heart or mind of man that influences his actions and makes the basic difference in a person choosing the right or wrong way of life. Heredity is the other element that is usually linked with bad environment and blamed for criminal activity. It has been suggested that some murderers coming from a slum environment also come from an undesirable family. It is said they have criminal blood in their veins and this combination of environment and heredity produces the criminal.

If we accept this premise, Mr. Speaker, have we not also the right to ask why it is that on a number of occasions two brothers from exactly the same home, raised under the same conditions, go in two absolutely different directions. Two brothers can have the same blood flowing through their veins, the same mother and father, can have lived in the same home, eaten the same meals, lived in the same atmosphere, associated with the same people, attended the same schools, had the same teachers, and yet go in completely different directions. The solution to our problem could possibly be achieved if we had the answer to what makes two brothers go different ways, one right and the other wrong, in spite of the same environment, the same conditions, the same blood and the same background. I therefore cannot support the claim that it is environment or heredity that produces murderers.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I do not believe that any two people really have the same environment. No two people have exactly the same kind of heredity, nor can it be acquired. Brothers have different faces, different physiques and other important personal characteristics in spite of having many common factors. I do not believe that the two factors of environment and heredity have any part in the compulsion or unknown cause which makes a person commit murder. Until this unknown cause is found and a treatment is devised I feel it is our duty as members of this house to support the retention of capital punishment, at least for a second offender.

[Mr. McIntosh.]

Finally, I wish to say that the execution of a murderer must be a horrible spectacle. However, we must not forget that murder is more horrid. The supreme penalty should be exacted only after guilt is established beyond the shadow of a doubt and only for wanton, wilful, premeditated murder.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Pelletier (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, I think that we are all fully conscious in this house of the exceptional importance and seriousness of the matter under consideration today.

That is why I would like to point out at the outset of my intervention the need to enter the debate in the right frame of mind. By that I mean that it is our duty to consider the question of the death penalty with all the coolness we can; we must avoid using too many emotional arguments; we must give up using alarmist pleas, building on the fear of the citizens to inspire to the latter thoughts of vengeance against murderers; we must also forgo any gruesome retelling of executions meant to exploit the sensibility of people in favour of those sentenced to die and against the death penalty.

What is most important in such a debate, and in the vote which will follow, is that the parliament of this country should prove up to the task, that each one of us should base his choice between abolition and retention, whatever that choice may be, not on prejudice, not on fear, not on hate, not on vengefulness, even less on easy emotionalism or on the taste for novelty, but rather on reason, on the teachings of history and on the data which science places at our disposal in this field.

Another mistake which could be very serious would be to approach that problem in a perspective which is too narrow, to treat it as if it were a simple police matter when it is in fact a problem of civilization.

Finally, just as parliament has understood the need to remove all party considerations from this debate, so each one of us must understand that emotivity cannot be a reliable guide in such a matter and that only the arguments based on reason have their place here if we want to reach a fair decision.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I deplore the fact that some politicians outside this house felt it necessary, during the last months, to multiply the public interventions against the very idea of this debate, turning beforehand the citizens against the results of the work we had not yet undertaken. I also deplore the