

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

the best shape for such an admittedly essential job in society. Can it not be argued reasonably that others who save life such as doctors, surgeons and great research men, should also have the highest protection of our society. If they are murdered, our society loses enormously and they, too, should be included in this special protection.

Sometimes it is argued that the death penalty should only be maintained for treason, and so it goes. Who is to decide what is the worst kind of murder? The murder of a young person may remove from this world the very person who might have discovered a cure for cancer or a cure for some other disease that would save millions of lives. The murder of policemen and guards is certainly not permissible, and I agree that our society should make it clear and plain that this is so; but neither is the murder of any other human being. There are thousands, probably millions, who feel the death penalty is a deterrent to murder. It is a long established practice that before repeal or revision of a statute, those who seek the alteration must accept the onus for substantiating their claim that a requirement exists for such change.

The people most immediately involved with protecting and apprehending murderers, our policemen, do not want abolition. In other areas of our society, we base our decisions on the opinions of those most closely connected with the problem, so why not do so in this important case? There are many people in the country who understand the processes of government better than we blinkered politicians sometimes realize. This is an emotional issue. Members of this house searched their souls during the last debate, as was obvious by the calibre of the speeches.

What is the Canadian public going to think of political morality if for no apparent reason an influential number of politicians now change their opinions, some 18 months later. This is supposed to be one of the most serious, if not the most serious question that we are asked to vote upon. It is a matter of life and death, not only the life or death of convicted murderers, but of life or death of the victims. It is admirable to have great pity for anyone who is in such a state that he will murder, but as much or more pity should surely be shown for the victim and those who mourn him.

It was my impression that the subject was taken very seriously in April last year, that the speeches were very carefully prepared to obtain every ounce of influence the speaker could muster, and every ounce of conviction.

I would suppose, from considering carefully all speeches on the subject, that this is a decision based on the deepest roots of individual conscience. Some members of this house are more sensitive than others, some have higher I.Q.'s than others, but surely there is a rock of conscience in each of us that sets our limits and sets our values. This does not change; or if it does, there must be some new influence, some new knowledge.

If anyone can produce new influences, new knowledge, it will be worth hearing, but I feel very sure that Canadians inside or outside this house, who fear the increase of violence, can have found nothing to ease their fears in this last year or year and a half. Having been brought up in the trust of law and order, I cannot believe that it is unsafe to walk on the streets of many North American cities, even in broad daylight. Still we hear and see every day that this is so. Law and order is a vital, essential part of civilization.

I hope I am at least average in tolerance and sensitivity. I have been accused of too much individuality, and indeed I do not take second place to any member of this house in my respect for the individual. I would like to credit all my colleagues with a great respect for their fellow men; but I do not believe this involves license for those who go beyond civilized limits; and murder is beyond civilized limits.

I will not repeat the degree of emotionalism which I touched upon in my last speech on this subject, but it is indicative that not one mother expressed objection to my statement. If my much beloved child murdered, I can think of no other punishment that could allow me to face the mother of the victim. It is murder that we should be worrying about, not the punishment.

Is there great public demand for abolition of capital punishment? Was there a great public outcry 18 months ago when the majority of members of parliament did not want abolition? Was there a great public outcry, or indeed any private communications, that M.P.'s were not properly representing the country? Not to me, and I have certainly been clear enough on the subject.

I wish I could always speak with such conviction, Mr. Speaker. I speak from the depth of my own conscience and with complete confidence that I am representing a definite majority of the people in my constituency and the people I meet; and I think I get around as much as most members of this house.