

*Capital Punishment*

apply equally to this country and should be noted in this debate.

Expressing a view which applies currently to Canada, the commission said that violence must be brought under control to safeguard life and property, and to make possible the creation of the understanding and co-operation needed to remedy underlying causes. No society can remain free, much less deal effectively with fundamental problems, if its people live in fear of their fellow citizens. It is ancient wisdom that a House divided against itself cannot stand. I subscribe to these views, Mr. Speaker. I support measures which would eliminate violence in our free society. In my view, the better control of illegitimate violence, such as violent crime in our society is an urgent imperative. It is within our means to achieve this end.

Many studies have identified the basic causes of violent crime. Those basic causes apply to people in this country as well as to those in the United States. How are we to cure violent crime? It is suggested that warring on poverty, unemployment and inadequate housing, is warring on crime. Civil rights laws are laws against crime. Money for schools is money used against crime. Medical, psychiatric and family counselling services are services which fight crime. Most important of all, every effort to improve life in Canada's cities and ghettos is an effort in the war against crime.

We have not taken seriously the impact of such measures on our war against crime. For this reason I wish to place on record several findings of the commission to which I referred. These findings are most important and should be taken seriously if we are to attack root causes of violent crime and the unacceptable increase in the incidence of crime. The commission reported:

... we have identified certain themes of challenge for the leader and people of America. Among these are the following:

First: As we have noted, not all violence in our society is illegitimate. Indeed, a major function of society is the organization and legitimation of violence in the interest of maintaining society itself. Unfortunately, however, the existence of legitimate violence—from a shooting in lawful self-defense through international violence in the form of warfare—sometimes provides rationalization for those who would achieve ends or express grievances through illegitimate violence.

Second: Violence by some individuals may result in part from a deranged mind or abnormal biological make-up. Experts agree, however, that most persons who commit violence—criminal or noncriminal—are basically no different from others, and their behavior is the result of the complex interaction of their biology and life experience. Scholars observe that man has no instinct or trait born within that directs aggression in a specific way. He does have, from birth, the potential for violence. He also has the capacity for creative, constructive activity and for the rejection of violence. Insofar as life experience teaches individuals violence, the incidence of violence is subject to modification, control, and prevention through conscious changes in man's environment.

Third: Historically, when groups or individuals have been unable to attain the quality of life to which they believe they are entitled, the resulting discontent and anger have often culminated in violence. Violent protest today—from middle-class students to the inhabitants of the black ghettos and the white ghettos—has occurred in part because the protesters believe that they cannot make their demands felt effectively through normal, approved channels and that "the system," for whatever reasons, has become unresponsive to them.

Fourth: Progress in meeting the demands of those seeking social change does not always reduce the level of violence. It may cause those who feel threatened by change to engage in counter-violence against those seeking to shift the balance. And the pace of change may be slower and more uneven than the challenging group is willing to

[Mr. Alexander.]

tolerate. We see these social forces at work in our country today. After several decades of rapid social change, we have better housing, education, medical care and career opportunities for most groups in our society than at any time in the past. Nonetheless, these advances have been uneven, and what we have so far achieved falls short of the needs or expectations of many. Impatience is felt on all sides, and our social order is subject to escalated demand both from those who desire greater stability and from those who desire greater social change.

Fifth: The key to much of the violence in our society seems to lie with the young.

Remember, this report was made in 1969. It is still valid today. I continue quoting:

Our youth account for an ever-increasing percentage of crime, greater than their increasing percentage of the population. The thrust of much of the group protest and collective violence—on the campus, in the ghettos, in the streets—is provided by our young people. It may be here, with tomorrow's generation, that much of the emphasis of our studies and the national response should lie.

Sixth: The existence of a large number of firearms in private hands and a deep-seated tradition of private firearms ownership are complicating factors in the task of social control of violence.

● (2110)

Does that sound familiar, Mr. Speaker?

Seventh: Additional complications arise from the high visibility of both violence and social inequalities, resulting from the widespread impact of mass communications media. The power impact of the media may aggravate the problems of controlling violence; on the other hand, the media may be one of our most useful social agents for explaining all elements of our society to another and achieving a consensus as to the need for social change that may help to reduce levels of violence.

The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has continually tried to impress upon the government that it should move in the direction of controlling violence on TV. This has also been referred to by my hon. friend from Battle River and others.

Eighth: Social control of violence through law depends in large measure on the perceived legitimacy of the law and the society it supports. Persons tend to obey the law when the groups with which they identify disapprove those who violate it. Group attitudes about lawful behavior depend, in turn, on the group's views of the justice provided by the legal order and of the society which created it. The justice and decency of the social order thus are not simply desirable embellishments. On the contrary, a widespread conviction of the essential justice and decency of the social order is an indispensable condition of civil peace in a free society.

Ninth: Our system of criminal justice suffers from an under-investment of resources at every level—police, courts and corrections. Partly because of this accumulated deficit, the criminal justice system is neither as strong nor as fair as it should be—and consequently it has failed to control illegitimate violence as well as it should.

Does that sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? I repeat that these words were written in 1969.

Tenth: The social control of violence does not depend merely on the conduct of those who attack or defend the social order. It depends also on the attitudes, co-operation, and commitments of the community—of our political, religious, educational, and other social institutions and of citizens in every walk of life. Violence in our society affects us all. Its more effective control requires the active engagement and commitment of every citizen.

I want to emphasize "every citizen". Let the government not simply say to members of parliament, "Pass this bill on capital punishment or defeat it", and that is an end to it. There will have to be a commitment from every citizen to accept the themes of challenge that I have just put before the House. But if those challenges are accepted, Mr. Speaker, do we not then have hope for and faith in the future? It seems to me those challenges should be accepted. They