

*Criminal Code*

extreme emotionalism, possibly followed by bitterness. But I think it is very much to the credit of all hon. members who have spoken that the calibre of the debate so far has been fine and that the various opinions have been expressed in such a sincere, studious and thoughtful manner.

The amiable and eloquent hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) objected to those in favour of retention inferring, intentionally or unintentionally, that abolitionists were soft on criminals. I would like to add an equally strong objection against those in favour of abolition inferring, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that those in favour of retention are somehow barbaric, unthinking and unprogressive.

One hon. member of the house said:

I see few members of this house prepared to question it—that abolition of the death penalty constitutes in itself social progress.

I definitely question it, Mr. Speaker, and I suggest that by their speeches and opinions many hon. members question it too.

I do not agree with the inference that those who wish to abolish the death penalty are more modern, more learned or more sympathetic. For centuries thinkers and philosophers have returned time and time again to the idea of abolition. It is nothing new. It does not seem to me a sign of the maturing of our society. In fact it seems to me that the maturing of our society would be exhibited by a decline in crime altogether. But though we are rightfully boasting of our enormously high standard of living, yet at the same time we are considerably worried about the increase in violence, delinquency, and organized and professional murdering.

According to the Department of Justice June 1965, publication, "Capital Punishment", there are slightly over 60 countries in the world which still retain the death penalty and there are about half that number which have abolished it, totally or in part, so it does not seem at all true to say that we are somehow behind the times and very unprogressive if we do not rush into abolition of the death penalty.

The hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Woolliams) said in his excellent speech that it is nice to be a reformer. Indeed this is true. It is very dramatic and it is very attention getting, but to be a worthwhile reformer the reform proposed must involve some improvement in our society and no one yet has been able to state convincingly, to me at least, that abolition of the death penalty would be an improvement in our control of murder.

[Mrs. Wadds.]

• (4:30 p.m.)

Only 13 of the 50 states of the United States have abolished the death penalty and in three of these the penalty has been revived. New Zealand and Australia have brought it back again after periods of abolition. It seems to me that very clearly it is a matter of interpretation, the interpretation of our regard for human life. It is precisely because I do regard human life as so precious and as the fundamental birthright of every human being that I say the gravest penalty must be maintained as a warning against murder and to encourage a premeditated and thoughtful form of human behaviour. Our whole society is concentrated on protecting this birthright, this feeling of the precious element of human life. We pride ourselves with some justification on the lowering of infant mortality, the extended life expectancy, our vastly improved medical science, and freedom from starvation and death by exposure. Whether it be from pride in our social standards or moral and religious codes, our whole way of life is directed to keeping people alive.

Research scientists, some of our most gifted minds, often die in despair having devoted their whole lives to the search for a cure in one phase of a disease. We have armies of police and we spend millions of dollars protecting people by instituting laws against assault, against reckless driving and against any behaviour that might lead to bodily harm. This all is based on our respect for human life and our desire that the life of each person, young and old, small or big, sick or well, should be untouchable and inviolate.

The person who rebels against this society, who sells or gives a government secret to another government is accused of treason. Generally this is considered the worst of all crimes and in some countries capital punishment is even maintained for treason when it is abolished for murder. I feel strongly that rebelling against our society to the extent of committing premeditated murder is just as loathsome as treason.

Other mistakes are retrievable, as has been said time and again in this debate, but this one is not. I think our young people should grow up knowing this, learning this. Why should there be so much talk about the irretrievability of the death penalty and so little regarding the irretrievability of the life of the victim? Why should we be so squeamish about retribution? Learning to live at all well or fully or rewardingly is learning of