

Criminal Code

I was greatly interested in a number of suggestions brought out by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Goode), and I find that I can agree with some of the points mentioned.

However, I cannot agree that capital punishment should be abolished in this country. I think it is a good thing to bring these matters before parliament because, since coming here, I have found that the debates in the house help us to arrive at conclusions, and those debates are necessary, particularly when matters as important as this are brought before us.

Perhaps indirectly, but nevertheless truly, the matter of capital punishment is of great concern to members of parliament, because we are responsible for the laws of this country. We must determine what the legislation will be. I think from time to time we should review that legislation. At the present time the committee on the Criminal Code is doing an excellent job in reviewing that statute. It is an immense problem, a big job, and I am sure they will find it necessary to suggest changes that should be made in the Criminal Code.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw has advanced a number of arguments which many of us could support. He has pointed out that there are many countries in which capital punishment has been abolished, with results that do support the views he has expressed. I can agree with him in respect of the figures he has quoted concerning countries where capital punishment has been abolished, because as disclosed in a number of books I have read on this matter it would appear that the number of murders has decreased to a considerable degree where the death penalty has not been in effect. This we can concede.

But we must also be prepared to concede that these are countries that have advanced and developed materially during the years. If capital punishment had been in effect, how are we to know that the taking of human lives would not have dropped to an even greater degree? Those countries have advanced to the point where they have become more civilized, and it is my view that had capital punishment been in effect in those countries the number of murders would have been lessened to an even greater degree than has been the case under the system they have adopted.

In the United States of America last year reports indicate that not a single case of lynching was reported. This, it seems to me, indicates that today countries are becoming more advanced and more civilized, and that this menacing danger of murder is lessening from year to year. I do feel that the time

[Mr. Catherwood.]

will come when capital punishment will be abolished; but I do not feel that we can afford to take this very drastic step until we are fully and finally convinced that another form of punishment will act as a sufficient deterrent to crimes of this nature.

I think the hon. member has advanced splendid arguments, and I can agree with many of them. However, I am not yet convinced that in this country we should abolish capital punishment.

Mr. Noseworthy: What are your arguments against it?

Mr. Catherwood: Just a moment and I shall reach that point. If the hon. member had introduced a resolution to the effect that a different system of capital punishment should be employed, I could have assured him of my support. The hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Goode) pointed out other methods that could be used. I will agree with the hon. member for Moose Jaw that the present system is most revolting, most barbarous, most inhuman. I think we can all agree with him on that. But we do not have to go back very far in history to the days of the stretching racks and other inhuman methods. We can recall reading of the days when murderers were stretched limb from limb. We know, too, of the execution block, which was another form of punishment which prevailed for centuries.

We can be very thankful that we have made at least some progress since that time, but not enough. Surely there are other means than the gallows whereby those people, who have forfeited their right to live, can pay their final debt to society.

The hon. member referred to the *United Church Observer*, a publication that commands the respect of all Christian people, which recently stated editorially:

Can anything be more brutal, more cruel or inhuman? We would not treat a dog that way. The Christian conscience is shocked at such a sadistic spectacle. If it is necessary to put a criminal to death—and we are not persuaded it is the Christian thing to do—surely some more humane way of doing so should be used.

That is very definitely in line with the sentiment I have in the matter. I believe some more humane method should be followed, when dealing with those who commit murder. I do feel that when a change is made in regard to capital punishment, it must be to another form of capital punishment. Surely we can inaugurate some other form of execution that is not associated with conditions that existed centuries ago. In the carrying out of the death penalty there is the lethal chamber, carbon monoxide, or some other procedure which, I feel, would