

The recent controversy in the British Parliament over the plan to suspend the death penalty for murder for a test period of five years was remarkable in many ways; but perhaps its two most striking features were, first, the public reaction to the move, and second, the sudden reversal of policy. It is probable that the latter was due largely to the former, notwithstanding that in both Houses some powerful voices were raised in opposition to the proposal.

The public reaction, for and against, found expression in newspaper articles, in letters to the editor, and most notably in a ballot conducted by the London *Daily Mail*, which covered almost all parts of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and therefore may be taken as a fair sample of what the people were thinking. The result showed 867 ballots favouring the decision of the Commons, and 37,285 in favour of retaining capital punishment.

The controversy stresses the speed and vigour with which public opinion can be mobilized in a country where, as in Britain, a large population is concentrated in a small area. For that reason it is bound to make a deep impression upon the mind of a Canadian, for in this country such a mobilization would be impossible.

However, the result goes much deeper in that it evinces a significant return to first principles. Though the idea of reformation bulks larger and larger in criminal law administration in modern days, the fact remains that what society demands, as the prime consideration, is its own protection. It is elementary that the criminal law sets a minimum standard of conduct to which all must conform if there is to be an organized society at all. There can be no basis for measures of security, economic or other, unless there is first a guarantee that society will do its utmost to ensure that human life will be safe from criminal violence. Britain's wholesome record in that respect gives strength to the argument that the death penalty for murder is a real deterrent, even if it hasn't succeeded in abolishing the crime.

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Britain's withdrawal from Palestine on May 14 marked the beginning of the end for a great police force and its brave efforts to stabilize that tiny country in prosperity and dignity. When the Holy Land came under the mandate, "A Job Well Done" it was depleted, backward, almost medieval in its outlook.

That today it is one of the best developed parts of the Middle East, some credit must go to the Palestine Police, for without the public security that force maintained such development would not have been possible. Evidence of this is to be seen in the bloodshed and chaos that are a sequel to the disbanding of the force.

Civil Administration took over control from occupation troops in 1923, six years after Allenby's conquest. Its first task was to build up a permanent police and reopen the law courts—prime essentials in establishing peace, order and good government anywhere. The famous Palestine Police evolved from a cadre of 1,300 men which had been raised locally during the three previous years. Directed by British officers and organized along lines similar to those of our own North West Mounted Police, it grew in strength and mobility with each new outbreak of violence until eventually it matured into a highly disciplined, highly trained, highly mechanized force with strength greater than an army division, and the Briton, Arab and Jew who made up its ranks were inspired by an *esprit de corps* that surmounted personal considerations.

Its members were not liable for military service, though armed with rifles and directly under a commandant. In rural areas they were poorly quartered, often in the ancient huts that are relics of Turkish rule. But the lack of suitable barracks had its compensations, for it compelled the detachment personnel to live in isolated neighbourhoods, which gave them an intimate acquaintanceship with the inhabitants.

To preserve the main fabric of law and order among people who were blinded by racial and religious passion and frequently in the throes of open rebellion was the onerous and thankless duty of the force. It discharged that duty unflinchingly for nearly three turbulent decades, always under most exacting conditions.

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