

Capitol punishment 1732



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CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Capital Punishment deters murder, and is just Retribution

Capital punishment, is the execution of criminals by the state, for committing crimes, regarded so heinous, that this is the only acceptable punishment.

Capital

punishment does not only lower the murder rate, but it's value as retribution alone is

a good reason for handing out death sentences. Support for the death penalty in the

U. S. has risen to an average of 80% according to an article written by Richard Worsnop,

entitled " Death penalty debate centres on Retribution", this figure is slightly lower in

Canada where support for the death penalty is at 72% of the population over 18 years

of age, as stated in article by Kirk Makir, in the March 26, 1987 edition of the Globe and

Mail, titled " B. C. MPs split on Death Penalty".

The death penalty deters murder by putting the fear of death into would be

killers. A person is less likely to do something, if he or she thinks that harm will come

to him. Another way the death penalty deters murder, is the fact that if the killer is

dead, he will not be able to kill again.

Most supporters of the death penalty feel that offenders should be punished for

their crimes, and that it does not matter whether it will deter the crime rate.

Supporters

of the death penalty are in favour of making examples out of offenders, and that the

threat of death will be enough to deter the crime rate, but the crime rate is irrelevant.

According to Isaac Ehrlich's study, published on April 16, 1976, eight murders are

deterred for each execution that is carried out in the U. S. A. He goes on to say, " If one

execution of a guilty capital murderer deters the murder of one innocent life, the

execution is justified." To most supporters of the death penalty, like Ehrlich, if even 1

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life is saved, for countless executions of the guilty, it is a good reason for the death

penalty. The theory that society engages in murder when executing the guilty, is

considered invalid by most supporters, including Ehrlich. He feels that execution of

convicted offenders expresses the great value society places on innocent life.

Isaac Ehrlich goes on to state that racism is also a point used by death penalty

advocates. We will use the U. S. as examples, since we can not look at the inmates on

death row in Canada, because there are laws in Canada that state that crime statistics can

not be based on race, also the fact that there are no inmates on death row in Canada.

In the U. S. 16 out of 1000 whites arrested for murder are sentenced to death, while 12

of 1000 blacks arrested for murder were sentenced to death. 1. 1% of black inmates on

death row were executed, while 1. 7% of white inmates will die.

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Another cry for racism, as according to Ehrlich, that is raised by advocates of the

death penalty is based on the colour of the victim, for example " if the victim is white,

it is more likely that the offender will get the death penalty than if the victim had been

black". This is true, if you look at the actual number of people who are murder. More

people kill whites and get the death penalty, then people who kill blacks and get the

death penalty. The reason for this is that more whites are killed, and the murders

captured. Now if we look at the number of blacks killed it is a lot less, but you have

to look at these numbers proportionately. Percent wise it is almost the same number for

any race, so this is not the issue.

In a 1986 study done by Professor Stephen K. Layson of the University of North

Carolina, the conclusions made by Ehrlich were updated, and showed to be a little on

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the low side as far as the deterrence factor of capital punishment. Professor Layson

found that 18 murders were deterred by each execution in the U. S. He also found that

executions increase the probability of arrest, conviction, and other executions of heinous

offenders.

According to a statement issued by George C. Smith, Director of Litigation, Washington Legal Foundation, titled " In Support of the Death Penalty", support for the

death penalty has grown in the U. S., as the crime rate increased. In 1966, 42% of

Americans were in favour of capital punishment while 47% were opposed to it. Since

the crime rate in the United States has increased, support for the capital punishment has

followed suit. In 1986, support for capital punishment was 80% for and only 17%

against with 3% undecided, but most of the undecided votes said they were leaning

toward a pro capital punishment stance, if they had to vote on it immediately.

Let us now focus on Canada. The last two people to be executed, in Canada were

Arthur Lucas and Ron Turpin. They were executed on December 11, 1962.

The

executions in Canada were carried out by hanging. 1

The death penalty was abolished in Canada in the latter part of 1976, after a debate that lasted 98 hours. The death penalty was only beaten by 6 votes.

If we look

back to 1976, the year the death penalty was abolished in Canada, threats of death, were

being made to Members of Parliament and their immediate families from pro death

penalty advocates. Most members of parliament, voted on their own personal feelings,

as opposed to the views of their voters. 2

The same was the case in British Columbia, where accepting of the death penalty,

if it was reinstated 1987 , by the federal government was discussed. The M. P. s were

split, 17 out of 29 were for the death penalty. This showed, that even the majority of the

M. P. s were in favour of the death penalty in B. C. Support for the death penalty in

British Columbia at the time was almost 70%, but the M. P. s felt that it was up to them

to vote how they felt was right, and not to vote on which vote would give them the best

chance for a second term. 3

In 1987, the Progressive Conservative government wanted to hold a free vote on

the reinstatement of Capital punishment, but Justice minister Ray Hnatyshyn, who was

opposed to it, pressured the M. P. s, into voted against the bill. Ray Hnatyshyn, was the

deciding factor, if not for him, it was widely believed that the reinstatement of capital

punishment would have gone through, and the death penalty would be a reality today. 4

Capital punishment is such a volatile issue, and both sides are so deeply rooted

in their views that they are willing to do almost anything to sway all of the people they

can to their side.

We personally feel, and our views are backed up by proof, in the form of studies

by the likes of Isaac Ehrlich's 1975 and Prof. Stephen K. Layson's, that was published in

1986, and polls that have been taken both in Canada and the United States over the past

few years. All of these studies and surveys show that capital punishment is a valid

deterrent to crime, and obviously the public, and society as a whole are in favour of it.

The death penalty makes would be capital offenders think about whether committing a

crime is really worth their lives. Even if capital punishment did not deter crime, the

simple fact that it will allow society to "get even" with murders. Capital punishment

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also insures peace of mind because it insures that murders will never kill again.

1 From: Take Notice, (Copp Clarke Pitman Ltd., 1979) page 163

2 From: Article written by David Vienneau published in the March 24, 1987 edition of

the " Toronto Star", titled, Debate Agonizing for MPs.

3 From: Article written by Kirk Makir, published in March 26, 1987 edition of the " Globe

and Mail", titled, BC MPs Split on Death Penalty Debate.

4 From: Article written by Hugh Winsor, published in April 29, 1987 edition of the

" Globe and Mail", titled, Debate on Death Penalty placed on hold.