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SHOULD MURDERERS BE HANGED?

The humane proposal by Dr. J. K. Blair, M. P., that a lethal chamber be substituted for the hangman's rope in the execution of murderers might well serve to bring up for re-examination the whole question of capital punishment. Mr. Lapointe has promised Dr. Blair a special committee next session to make a thorough study of the subject. That committee should have wide powers. It should not confine its probing of public opinion and its study of effects to any particular method of carrying out the sentence of the court. It should collect, analyze and present all the evidence in existence as to the fundamental wisdom and psychological effect of any form of capital punishment.

This is necessary because of the more or less submerged agitation that is always going on against the infliction of the death penalty. This has concentrated public attention on the ghastly details of the execution itself and deflected thought from the reasons why the State exercises from time to time the power to take a human life for what it regards as the public good. This tends to create a one-sided picture of superficial public feeling. Naturally, the whole community shudders at cruelty and instinctively revolts at killing a healthy man. If that is the entire picture as presented to the public, the verdict must be overwhelmingly against it.

Of course, this one-sided picture is not always the whole scene that is presented. With the swift justice we are so proud of in this country, the grim facts of the crime for which the murderer is being punished may still be in the popular memory. Unfortunately, we cannot say as much for our good friends to the South. They seem to like to postpone their executions until a new generation is compelled to ask: "What did this very docile, plucky and profoundly repentant man do that we are so mean to him?" Still, even in Canada there are people who object strongly to re-publishing the facts of the crime when the infliction of the punishment is recorded. They assert with great justice, that his innocent family and friends suffer, as they undoubtedly do.

Which brings us to the crux of the question. Why do we inflict capital punishment at all? Surely not for revenge. A civilized State cannot possibly avenge one murder with another. It has been three thousand years at least since any civilized community was driven to so crude and brutal—not to say brutalizing—an expedient to discourage murder. There are usually a hundred reasons why the community after a calm review of all the facts of any particular case, would not murder a murderer, even if that were the practice. He is commonly a poor, frail human being, and has been

driven or led into his crime by the generating or insanity-breeding influences for which the community itself is not always blameless.

Revenge is not the idea. The whole idea is the deterring of others. This is also the whole and the sole justification. If capital punishment does not reduce the risk of murder, then capital punishment is only a duplication, a State-sanctioned multiplication of murder. This obviously is one of the facts into which Dr. Blair's committee should inquire. There is lots of evidence on the subject. We have had many communities who have abolished capital punishment in the hope that the murderers would show proper appreciation and follow a good example. And we have had not a few of them which, after a few years' sadening experience, have gone back to the rope or the electric chair. The committee should collect and tabulate all the evidence available on this question.

The discussion as to whether hanging, electrocution or a lethal chamber is the best method of carrying out a court sentence is again a question of evidence—and possibly, psychology. The purpose is not to perform a painless surgical operation. The purpose is to impress prospective murderers. Which method does this the most effectively? Again, the committee might study statistics and hear evidence. Obviously, if we succeed in making an execution a pleasant or at all events a not unpleasant operation, the ruthless, often brutish men who murder for vile or mercenary motives are not likely to be so much in dread of it. "Shall they be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?" If so life imprisonment at the expense of the taxpayer will seem to many of them a much more punishing punishment. We will see murderers seeking to have their sentences commuted from life imprisonment to a swift release to soft music.

If we are to have capital punishment at all, it ought surely to be a form of punishment that will strike terror into the steely hearts of men who for greed of gain or love of cruelty will kill their fellow-men.

—Montreal Star

WILL NAME COMMISSIONER

OTTAWA, May 20—Appointment of a third member of the Royal Commission on Penitentiaries will be made at an early date, as possible, Hon. Ernest Lapointe, Minister of Justice, told Miss Agnes Macphail in the House of Commons.

The vacancy on the commission, which has not yet begun its inquiry, arises out of the recent death of Harry Anderson, former editor of The Toronto Globe.

FRENCH POPULAR FRONT HAS CHANCE TO PROVE ABILITY

Government in France is a matter of permutation and combination. Never since the Third Republic came into being 65 years ago has any single party held a majority of the seats in Parliament. In the last Chamber, for instance, the largest party was that of the Radical Socialists with a representation of 151. This was less than 25 per cent of the total.

Inevitably, therefore, every government depends for its support on a variety of parties of divergent views, interests and programmes. Hence a constant shuffling of the political cards and frequent cabinet upsets.

Because of the strategic position they have occupied between the conservatives and the radicals, the Radical Socialists have been the pivot of nearly every government that has held office in France during the last 35 years. Inheritors of the tradition of the French Revolution in 1789, it has been par excellence, the party of small shopkeepers, minor government functionaries, the lower middle class generally. Because of its liberalism, anti-clericalism and ardent republicanism, it has tended to draw close to the other parties of the Left. But it has not hesitated in times of emergency to coalesce with parties of the Right and Centre in governments of national union. This happened at the time of the franc crisis in 1926 and again after the Paris riots of Feb. 6, 1934, when the Radicals agreed to support Doumergue and later supported Flaminio, Laval and Sarraut as well.

In brief, the unique service of the Radical Socialists has been to liberalize the Right and moderate the Left. But from now on it may not be in a position to continue that function. In the election just concluded the Radical Socialists were reduced in numbers from 151 to 116.

This fact makes impossible the continuation of such a government as the Sarraut-Flaminio regime which depended for its support on the Radical Socialists, the Centre and part of the Right. Such a combination no longer possesses a majority. The election proved that the French electorate has moved sharply to the Left.

In the next Chamber instead of ten Communists, as in the last, there will be 71; instead of 93 Socialists, there will be 146, while the Popular front (Radical Socialists, Socialists, Communists, and other anti-Fascists), which at most had 214 deputies in the last Chamber, will have around 380 now.

At the time the Popular front was formed in the Summer of 1934 it was freely predicted that the combination could not last. But not only has it

SCIENCE WILL END WAR, SAYS BOSTON PHYSICIST

DETROIT, May 20—War will be eliminated by science, says Dr. George R. Harrison, Director of Applied Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"In what are sometimes called the good old days", he said yesterday at the second Dearborn Conference of Agriculture, Industry and Science, "war, famine and pestilence were considered inevitable. If half of a man's family were wiped out in a week by diphtheria, it was the will of God. Through science, more than half of the pestilences have been wiped out. War is next.

"Although it is said that you can't change human nature, and that wars will endure until the end of time, war is going to be eliminated because it is economic in origin, and natural science, physics and chemistry and agriculture and industry, are gradually raising the availability of mankind's necessities and luxuries by wresting more and more from the chaos of nature. And it won't be social science, or political science, or economic science that will do this, but the good old natural sciences, which are fundamental to them all."

It also succeeded in winning a resounding victory at the polls. The principal significance of that victory, as Edgar Mowrer pointed out, is that the French people are definitely anti-Fascist, want no dictatorship or regimentation. But if the Popular front holds together and gives France a stable and lasting government the results may be far-reaching both with regard to domestic and foreign affairs.

But, on the other hand, if the Popular front fails to hold together, and that, too, is a real possibility, then France will be faced by an even greater measure of political instability than has been the case hitherto. The decline in strength of the moderates has made it difficult to create Left-Centre governments such as ruled in the past. The decided victory of the Communists Socialists and the Popular front generally must not obscure the fact that at the same time, the conservative and reactionary elements made gains. The Left, in being given an opportunity to rule, has been burdened by great responsibility.

From what you tell me you appear to lead a very sedentary life, and yet you're not flabby. You look, in fact, very fit.

It's the exercise I get tossing about at night thinking about my business.

HER FIVE YEAR PLAN

When just a lad I made a plan
What I would do when I, a man,
Would have a home, would have a wife,
Without a care—without a strife.

I would not strive for worldly wealth,
Just ease and comfort, love and health
I would not crave, I would not care
To be a famous millionaire.

But when I hit my manly stride
With my fair helpmate by my side,
I found that she had formulated
A bigger plan, ere she had mated.

With vim I started out to please her,
Became a tightwad money squeezer;
I worked by day, I worked by night,
Put up a furious, frenzied fight.

Say! Me? You bet I reached my goal,
But lost my wife and lost my soul;
Wealth, power, fame, 'Twas all
Baioney!

Her 'Five-Year Plan' was Alimony.
(Written just after the Russian Five-Year Plan).

HOW TO SECURE BETTER MILEAGE ON GASOLINE

Care in driving automobiles would do a great deal to cut down traffic accidents. But now experts tell us that care need not be confined to threading through traffic and that if a little of it is directed toward the handling of the motor and the accelerator drivers can save themselves a good deal of money in the course of a year.

The chief engineer of a Canadian motor company says there are no less than 26,150,000 automobile drivers in the United States who use 17 billion gallons of gas a year. If they would follow nine simple rules, he adds, they can save themselves no less than \$180 millions this year on their gas and oil bills. The nine rules are:

- (1) Don't tramp on the accelerator.
- (2) Don't drive with the choke on.
- (3) Don't start unnecessarily often.
- (4) Don't drive too long in second gear.
- (5) Don't accelerate on hills; go up at a uniform speed.
- (6) Don't drive fast against a wind.
- (7) Don't race the motor.
- (8) Don't practice sustained speed driving.
- (9) Don't drive too fast on slippery roads.

These don't are to the advantage of the motor car owner and are well worth remembering.

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