

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION

A Member Of The Canadian Federation Of Civil Liberties And Human Rights Associations



The following resolution was passed Thursday, February 26, 1976, at the Annual General Meeting of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association in Vancouver:

"The Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, while supporting the proposed abolition of capital punishment, as an intelligent and humane legislative step, nevertheless strongly opposes the planned substitution of mandatory long-term prison sentences in a country that already has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, and the further extension of indeterminate sentences for persons guilty of a broad range of offences.

In spite of the declared objective of protecting society from violent criminals, the legislation contradicts the overwhelming evidence of the lack of effect of imprisonment on further deterring or rehabilitating potential offenders. The legislation ensures that the person who finally gets back into society will be ^a more implacable enemy of that society and will constitute a greater danger to policemen and prison guards.

Such treatment of the guilty will almost certainly increase the level of disturbance and hostage taking in penitentiaries. Long term mandatory sentences diminish the ability of the criminal justice system to take an account of differences between offenders and thus increase injustice.

The extension of indeterminate sentences is a cruel fraud. It assumes we know how to identify the dangerous criminal and that we can cure him. We can do neither reliably with the result that this new proposal will create cruel injustices.

Both proposals allow the passions of the day to inflict serious and irreversible penalties on the guilty which in a more objective moment would seem unnecessarily brutal.

The changes in the wire tap provisions further heighten the inappropriateness of the title of this act, namely: The Protection of Privacy Act.

The effect of the changes is to remove the few protections of individual rights which were contained in the original act. An individual will no longer have any right, at any time, to be informed of surreptitious surveillance by the police. The legislative act will result in a dangerous erosion of individual civil rights and is too high a price to pay for the abolition of capital punishment, however desirable that is."

The foregoing resolution has been forwarded to the Hon. Ron Basford, Federal Minister of Justice.

Dave Robertson
President, B.C.C.L.A.