

Capital punishment debate *ad nauseum*

Contra Mundum

By Jeff Hoskin
Opinion Editor

I tried to let it go, I really did, but I just can't. I can't let anybody have the last word on me. Call it a weakness.

Erstwhile staff writer Mike Loader and I have been debating back and forth about capital punishment. The last installment in our little discussion appeared in the March 26 issue, with Mike knocking down straw men like Earl Anthony.

Mike asks why, in light of my well-documented distrust of government, I would place such a life or death decision in its malign grasp. The answer is, I wouldn't - heaven forbid. I would place it in the hands of twelve citizens, chosen to judge the guilt or innocence of an accused killer (and, remember, only the most hardened and intransigent murderers deserve the ultimate sanction). Of course juries aren't perfect (just ask O.J.), but so far no one has had a better idea.

The obvious chink in my armor of logic and reason is the innocent man situation - that is, if an innocent man is imprisoned, he can be freed if his innocence is exposed later, but you can't take back a lethal injection. This is troubling, but as police science improves it should recede as a practical consideration. Also, in keeping with my utilitarian philosophy I will say at the risk of opprobrium that the number of innocent people ex-

ecuted will pale in comparison to the number of murders committed by known killers who are allowed to live.

Which brings us to the hole in Mike's argument, namely justice. How do you opposed to capital punishment reconcile to yourselves the fact that an imprisoned killer still has many pleasurable activities available to him which are forever denied his victim(s)? I personally enjoy breathing a great deal, just for starters. There's the hole in Mike's argument: justice, that archaic concept our postmodern, multicultural philosophies have abandoned to our eternal detriment.

Mike doesn't want government and society to be responsible for anyone's death. But he failed to address my example of a proven sociopath, Lawrence Singleton, who was judged too old to be a threat and released from prison, only to kill a prostitute here in Las Vegas. Isn't government responsible for that murder? And parole boards are far less public, facing far less public scrutiny, than any trial.

Mike doesn't want to decide who lives or dies. He says that is for God to decide. I am not so squeamish as our beloved scribe. When it comes to hit men and serial killers - society's worst - I will be happy to make the decision for him.

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