

It's time to let Latimer go in peace

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ON OCT. 24, 1993, Robert Latimer, with forethought but no malice, ended the life of his severely disabled daughter, Tracy. His motivation was that he couldn't bear to see a child he loved dearly suffer any longer. Thus, he doesn't regret his act. The morality of it is a matter for him and his God to settle someday, not us.

Latimer's family bears him no malice. He has not denied what he did and has stated that, no matter what society does to him, he would do it again because he truly believes he did the right thing. His love for Tracy, and his need to see her without pain, was his focus. For his act of love, Latimer has been put through hell and back by our "just" society. He is now serving 10 years without parole.

The law, in his case, has proven to be blind and without mercy; only vengeance is being served. What are we accomplishing by spending a fortune to incarcerate an honest, hard-working individual who will not reoffend? Nothing! Certainly not justice, not by a long shot!

To get a true feeling of the absence of justice in Latimer's case, let's consider just how "just" Canadian society is. Robert Latimer was and is a solid member of society. He worked his butt off to make a living and paid his taxes without making any more complaint than the rest of us. He took excellent care of his family and was, and is, a well-respected member of his community. Then the cold, hard hand of fate struck and he was forced by his love for another human being to make a decision that I pray to the Great Spirit never comes my way. The sad details of his tragic story are well known.

Now compare how Canada's "just" society responds to vicious criminal acts perpetrated by hardened criminals.

I'll start by citing the horrific activities of one of the most perverse criminals that Canada has ever produced, Karla Homolka. For her part in murders involving barbaric torture and sexual abuse, she was given the sickeningly lenient sentence of 12 years. She, apparently a person devoid of mercy and integrity, is due to be released in July 2005. Canadians should pray that when she hits the streets again, she does not return to committing the kinds of horrors that she enthusiastically engaged in before getting caught.

The following 1998 abomination really highlights the lack of "justice" in our "just" society. Three young women in Calgary, laughing as they did it, beat another young woman to death. The judge commented, before sentencing: "The assaults were vicious, involving kicks to the head . . . with each offender feeding off the frenzy and the conduct of the others." Then Justice Scott Brooker hit them with a sentence that was surely meant to be a "deterrent" - four years. All are now out and enjoying their freedom, while Robert Latimer rots in prison.

To further illustrate how unfairly justice is passed out in our "just" society, I'll cite two more sick criminal acts:

In April 1995, a Saskatchewan man, Steven Krummerfield, in a case involving allegations of racism, beat to death a native woman and received only five years for committing the barbarity. Mr. Krummerfield is now out on day parole.

This headline appeared in the Nov. 27, 2001, issues of this newspaper: "Man gets three years for baby abuse; pedophile convicted second time for sexually assaulting an infant." I'll only need to quote this sickening gem from the story to make my point: "Weston W. Clulee pleaded guilty in Nova Scotia Supreme Court last year to sexually assaulting the four-month-old boy. The assault, which involved oral sex . . ."

Then, of course, we have crimes of greed to consider. In these cases, the perpetrator steals investment funds, etc. When caught, if prosecuted, the punishment is usually a few years. It appears that sentencing doesn't take into account the suffering caused for the many innocent victims who've lost everything because of the fraud and are driven to live in desperate poverty - or the worst scenario, suicide.

Now back to what is, in comparison to the before-mentioned, the mistreatment of Robert Latimer. My late father would often cite these words from the Bible, "Judge not, lest thou be judged," when he heard people making judgmental remarks about others. Since the Latimer case first came to light, many have rushed to judgment - all the way from idolizing to blanket condemnation. All I've ever tried to do was to put myself in Latimer's place and think of the anguish he must have felt, and probably still feels. I do know he loved his daughter dearly and for that, he cannot be faulted.

Can I say with a clear conscience that if put in a similar position as he was in, I wouldn't have done the same? The answer is: no. We all like to believe we wouldn't; but that is easy to say when one hasn't been there.

The Supreme Court, in handing down a judgment on his appeal, stated: "The (pardon) is a matter for the executive (the federal cabinet), not the court. The executive will undoubtedly, if it chooses to consider the matter, examine all of the underlying circumstances surrounding the tragedy of Tracy Latimer . . ." I keep thinking the court was more interested in following the letter of the law than in seeing justice done.

It's time for the cabinet to act. If it feels he must serve his time, then for the love of God and in the name of mercy and fairness, send him home to serve it under house arrest. If hardened criminals can enjoy leniency after committing horrors, it's a miscarriage of justice for Robert Latimer to be encased behind bars for carrying out an act of love.

There was no malice, Mr. Prime Minister. Show compassion and mercy; let him go!

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