

IS MURDER ON THE INCREASE ?

Unrivalled among anti-crime organizations anywhere in the world, Scotland Yard and the whole police system of England and Wales none-the-less face an apparent jump in the murder rate. Quoted in Parliament - 176 murders in the last nine months of 1957, 37 more than in the corresponding period the year before. Yet within minutes of "information received", squad cars are racing to the scene of an outrage.

Immediate action after the murder of a woman in South East London was recently filmed by our cameramen. For nowhere else in the world is the arrest of murderers more nearly certain than in Britain. But in Heston churchyard the grave of Muriel Maitland aptly testifies to the fact that the occasional murderer long escapes capture. Cycling through Cranford Park at a quarter-to-nine in the morning, Mrs. Maitland was on the way to her part-time work. She was assaulted, killed and dragged through a stream into the wood. Three days later a policeman found her body. This was the Hayes murder about which more than 5,000 people were interviewed.

No less a mystery was the murder of the Polish Countess, as long ago as last May. Can it not be true that the partial abolition of the extreme penalty just turns the scale in the mind of the would-be murderer. It was late evening at Gloucester Road tube station. Countess Labienska is believed to have alighted from a train and been stabbed there on the platform. She staggered to a lift before she collapsed. The most thorough investigations revealed nothing vital. The killer may have escaped by the stairs to street level.

Quite lately on a canal houseboat near Redditch a woman was found killed. Her husband afterwards committed suicide. Parts of the Press (the Weekly Reville, for example) concern themselves with the number of murderers still undiscovered. The Editor here discusses with a crime reporter the Paper's offer of twelve rewards of a thousand pounds each, for information leading to the capture of a dozen killers now at large. In Soho, meeting the famous Fabian of the Yard, Pathe sought his views.

Interviewer: "Sir, what do you think about the hanging laws in this country?"

Fabian: "You mean the abolition - oh, I think it's disgraceful. You know, I often think that these people who sign on the dotted line, they'd have never have done you you know if they'd seen what I've seen, little children, Elderly people, brutally assaulted and kicked around and murdered, they'd never have signed, if they'd seen that, I'm sure".

Interviewer: "Do you think hanging is a deterrent to Murder?"

Fabian: "I'm certain it is. You know there is such a fine line between grievous assault and Murder, that today, there's nothing to hold them back".

"They can go on basking away as they do these villians, and there's nothing to stop them, they don't fear that early morning walk".

To already overcrowded prisons go many murderers under the new homicide law. They'd be better dead, say the pro-hanging school; a view strongly challenged on several grounds, by opponents of Capital Punishment, especially that tireless campaigner, Mrs. Van Der Elst (on the left). Experienced in these grim places as a prison chaplain is Dr. Donald Soper. Who better qualified to put a Christian viewpoint?

Interviewer: "At this stage, can we form any judgement?"

Soper: "No, I should have thought it was too early to form any judgement yet, the law hasn't been in operation long enough for any correct judgement to be made, in any case, I am doubtful as to whether the figures are really authentic and therefore I should have thought it was far too early to form any judgement or final judgement".

Interviewer: "Why are you so against Hanging?"

Soper: "I'm against it because it's cowardly, I'm against it because it's inefficient, I'm against it because it's effasive - often sadistic, and out of date, but above all, I'm against it because I'm trying to be a Christian. It's my job to preach Christianity, and I'm perfectly certain that Capital Punishment is incompatible with the Christian truth and the Christian way, therefore I'm opposed to it look, stock and barrel".