

Global View - Capital Punishment (C0144)

Professor: That's all for today's class. We will continue our lecture on crime and punishment tomorrow.

A: Do you think we should be tougher on crime?

B: Well, it depends on what you mean.

A: For example, we could bring back the death penalty for murder, give longer prison sentences for lesser offences and lock up juvenile offenders.

B: Those really sound like Draconian measures. Firstly, what do you do about miscarriages of justice if you've already put innocent people to death?

A: You'd only use capital punishment if you were absolutely sure that you'd convicted the right person.

- B: But, there've been many cases of wrongful conviction where people have been imprisoned for many years. The authorities were sure at the time, but later it was shown that the evidence was unreliable. In some cases, it'd been fabricated by the police.
- A: Well, no system of justice can be perfect, but surely there's a good case for longer prison sentences to deter serious crime.
- B: I doubt whether they could act as an effective deterrent while the detection rate is so low. The best way to prevent crime is to convince people who commit it that they're going to be caught. It doesn't make sense to divert all your resources into the prison system.
- A: But if you detect more crimes, you'll still need prisons. In my reckoning, if we could lock up more juvenile criminals, they'd learn that they couldn't get away with it. Soft sentences will merely encourage them to do it again.

B: Yes, but remember that prisons are often schools for criminals. To remove crime from society, you really have to tackle its causes.

A: Well, if I were president, I would impose tougher laws and punishment. I would have a peaceful society based on fear of punishment, not consciousness of doing the right thing.

B: You sound like a dictator!

A: Well if it works, why not?

Key Vocabulary

death penalty

phrase

the punishment of death

prison sentence

common noun, plural

the amount of time to keep criminals in jail

juvenile fender	of-	<i>common noun, plu- ral</i>	underage criminals
Draconian		<i>Adjective</i>	very strict and severe
miscarriage of justice		<i>phrase</i>	an unjust legal decision
capital punishment	pun-	<i>phrase</i>	punishment of death
fabricate		<i>verb</i>	to make something up to trick people
deterrent		<i>common noun, sin- gular</i>	something that pre- vents people from doing something
divert		<i>verb</i>	to move resources from one thing to another
dictator		<i>common noun, sin- gular</i>	someone who rules with absolute power

Supplementary Vocabulary

diversion	<i>common noun, sin- gular</i>	the act of changing the direction or use of something
authoritarian	<i>Adjective</i>	expecting or requiring people to obey rules or laws
divisive topic	<i>phrase</i>	an issue that causes disagreement between people and causes them to separate into differ- ent groups
recidivist	<i>common noun, sin- gular</i>	a person who continues to commit crimes even after being caught and punished
rehabilitate	<i>verb</i>	to teach (a criminal in prison) to live a normal and productive life