

Discomfited diehards?

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I tried several more houses in that long, unfriendly street. Always the same result. Unknown, unknown.

Tonight I shall return to the Flore. I shall spend another evening waiting, waiting, always scanning the faces for the one I love and want so badly.

Where are you, Ebi? Shall I ever find you again? Shall I ever learn the truth of this? Or must you remain forever «inconnu»?

Discomfited Diehards?

Despite the newspaper headlines the Lords' second reading debate on the Criminal Justice Bill on Monday turned out to be largely (and significantly) a liberal occasion. If the floggers intend to make capital out of Lord Parker's case for the return of corporal punishment, they will find that they will have to be very careful about quoting him. The Lord Chief Justice emphasised that the fundamental principle in treating young offenders should be primarily remedial: in common with the anti-floggers, he came out in support of the Boston experiment, under which young delinquents spend two hours every weekday evening for up to three months in compulsory training. It emerged, too, that while Lord Parker believed corporal punishment to be a definite (but ill-defined) deterrent, one of his chief concerns was to avoid the necessity of passing three to five-year sentences on young men under 21, some of whom might still be completing their education. To avoid excessive caning or birching, he was prepared to restrict the power to quarter sessions and assizes.

The straightforward flogging peers had no truck with this moderate language and contrived, as a result, to present their argument at rather a greater disadvantage than usual. Lord Ailwyn trenchantly contended that «cissy» treatment inexorably edged the young criminal towards the shadow of the gallows (a shadow that he wanted to extend to cover not only all murderers but those convicted of «other revolting and diabolical crimes.») Lord Fortescue derived obscure encouragement from the «common knowledge» that «hanging did away with sheep stealing in a very few years.» *Nowadays there was «a simple operation» that should be performed «when a sexual or homosexual crime is repeated.»* (As it happened, the House had just heard that sexual offences were the only major category of criminal offence that actually declined last year.) The birching judges must often sigh over the enthusiasm of their noble friends.

Lord Stonham used the Pakenham-Thompson report to insist on more after-care for prisoners: at present, he said, the country spends £ 15 million a year in keeping men in prison and less than £ 250,000 in helping them to stay out.

(«Economist», London.)