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There are times when the United States seems an awfully long way from western Europe. Their puzzled TV coverage of the football World Cup plays like the work of Venusians. Their taste for cherry-flavoured colas commends collective derangement.

On a significantly more heavy note, that nation's continuing eagerness for the ultimate sanction definitely chills the blood. I deserve to be more accurate. Capital punishment remains, of course, depressingly popular across the world. Park yourself in a tavern bar or its digital equivalent following any hideous murder and you will most likely, hear any number of calls to "bring back hanging".

In Dublin, [Dubrovnik](#) and Dortmund, a large slice of superbly reasonable people still searches for the return of that ultimate retribution.

In too many corners of the US nevertheless, popular will drives the particular annihilation of condemned citizens. On Thursday, Troy Davis, found guilty of murder on really wobbly proof, was executed by deadly injection in the state of Georgia. "I am innocent," Davis asserted moments before the needle was applied. "I did not have a gun."

It is fair to identify that there are fewer executions in the States than you may think. "Only" 46 inmates were put to death in 2010. Bear in mind that a worrying 17 of those happened in Texas and as well as feeling a bit more concerned about the advance of Governor Rick Perry you will admit that the nation's authorities are not precisely syringe-crazy. Still, it's not a cheerful lot for the computed 3,250 sitting sweatily on death row.

Few front-line US flesh pressers have made any heavy effort to oppose the death penalty. Returning to our opening point about the foreignness of America, it is worth pointing out that, in 2007, Barack Obama, then a rising force, wrote that he supported the death penalty in cases "so despicable, so outside the pale, the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its shock by meting out the final punishment".

European readers could not withstanding the numerous lawyerly qualifications be forgiven for rubbing their eyes rabidly and looking around to test they had not been taken to Opposite Land.

At this point in his career, Obama was being hailed as the fresh face of latt-drinking liberal America. Yet he was supporting a policy that, in western Europe, only parties of the far right include in their manifestos. Welcome to the skinhead fringe, Barack.

The gruesome truth is that no US presidential candidate stands a chance if he does not support capital punishment. It comes as no surprise to hear that, at a debate, Perry, a serious contender for the Republican designation, attracted applause when commenting on Texas's extreme taste for slaughtering its own citizens. It is more sobering to recollect Bill Clinton's noticeable flight back to Arkansas to watch the execution of a psychologically impaired black man during the 1992 campaign.

Here's the point. You could disagree that the main line American politician's approach towards the ultimate penalty demonstrates that states firm respect for democracy. In a place that commonly elects sheriffs, judges and (beats me) comptrollers, it might need significant bravery some would say audacity to defy the electorate on such a serious issue. After all, a Gallup poll revealed that only 29 percent of US citizens oppose the death penalty.

And yet. The parliamentary democracies of western Europe have, over the years, stubbornly, bravely declined to yield to popular pressure on this matter. Of course, membership of the Council of Europe prohibits individual states from bringing back the ultimate penalty. But there are always votes in stringing up bad guys. Even a futile declaration of intention would appeal to a wide portion of the electorate.

Consider a recent ridiculous try experimenting with well-liked democracy in the United Kingdom. The coalition government promoted the setting up of a website that would permit visitors to substantiate "e-petitions". Any adequately well-liked campaign could, in principle, generate a debate in the House of Commons. Well, you can see where this is heading. Inside a few days, thousands had voted for a discussion on bringing back capital punishment. A 2010 YouGov survey advised that only 37 % of UK citizens would oppose the reinstatement of the

ultimate sanction.

Yet there is , among MPs, no heavy support for a change in the law. In spite of contemporary comments by retired judge Richard Johnson, who called for a return to executions, the situation remains much the same in this fine country.

For once, it behoves us those among us from the bleeding-heart inclination, anyhow to tip our hats to the officeholders. They aren't all yellow bellies. They don't always capitulate to the noisiest, angriest voices. The proven fact that they refused to reach for the rope doesn't imply they're not listening. It merely recommends they actually have some moral fibre. Are you paying attention, Mr Obama?, as reported tagza.com.

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