

Capital Punishment

Canadians have an opportunity to get a closer look at that, as we did as Members of Parliament, when they have an opportunity to look at the American experiences in various States where capital punishment still exists, we see that in those States, for example, murder rates are much higher than in other States where life is respected and capital punishment was abolished.

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if all Canadians could have been here in our place tonight, whether they would be ready to press the button, to say: Yes, we will kill, we will institutionalize murder in Canada.

Because I think that when Canadians get a closer look at the American experience, the experience in other countries, as soon as Canadians see that capital punishment strikes much harder at Indians for instance, blacks, minorities and the poor, Mr. Speaker, we can see that people will not be prepared to accept surveys favouring capital punishment.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members in this House who have not yet made a decision, although I think most of us already made a decision, I urge them to see that such a resolution should never pass if we are to be called civilized people. Otherwise we are not civilized. We are reverting to the law of the jungle.

As far as I am concerned, as a Member of Parliament, even if that means losing this next election, I will never accept the law of the jungle because we have a civilization and we want to put an end to capital punishment.

Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, at the moment when I speak and at the time it is, I will have been the Member who spoke both on the eve and on the day of the vote itself, and I think that even though all Members did not have an opportunity to rise on this issue, a fact which I deplore, I might add, the truth of the matter is that most if not all arguments have been made with respect to this motion.

I do not pretend to have anything new to add to what has already been said, let alone hope to help our few undecided colleagues make up their mind. Still I would simply and briefly express the modest inspiration I drew from this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I was anxious to have a say in this debate not only because of its unique character and because it is a non-partisan issue, but especially because of its humanitarian nature.

A non-partisan vote, a free vote, the freedom to decide whether capital punishment should be restored: the death penalty is the ultimate punishment meted out to someone who has taken somebody else's life. The basic concept which flows from this is the notion of ransom, or retribution, convince others not to do evil, separate the bad citizens from the others.

In this day and age, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the economy of life is somewhat deregulated, confused, just as inflationary as the life of the economy. Indeed, health and ecology have now become the haven of morality and the only

consensus of so-called liberal societies, so much so, Mr. Speaker, that today smokers are confined to isolation.

Since the turn of the century we have democratized death by turning our citizens into warriors and applying the concept of war, which may have prompted Malraux to say: "A life is worth nothing, but nothing is worth a life".

The murderer does not put much value on life, so can society in turn put little value on the murderer's life?

We do not need capital punishment to render true justice, and this is indeed the basic reason why I intend to vote against the motion under consideration.

Without being history fanatics, we must however look at past experience both at home and in other democracies to find that the facts suggest imposing capital punishment is largely determined by the whims of the judicial system, for instance the inclinations and qualifications of Crown prosecutors, the capacity of the accused to retain a good lawyer, the skill or qualifications of the defence attorneys.

In the past, Mr. Speaker, capital punishment was used disproportionately and unfairly against the poor, the socially underprivileged, people from ethnic or racial minorities.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the State has a duty to protect the lives of all its citizens, and as the criminologist André Normandeau so aptly said in an article published in *La Presse* on March 12, 1987: "In the light of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, all citizens are equal and respect for life knows no exception."

The State cannot give itself the right to kill, that would be an incroachment against human rights.

Canada is perceived internationally as a leader in the progressive area of rights and freedoms. By reinstating capital punishment, Canada would be taking a step backward, and while abrogating its international commitment to those standards, it would be imposing a clearly immoral concept and negating that sacred right to life enshrined in our Charter.

Mr. Speaker, we must aspire to a much higher ideal and, while admitting the public's legitimate concern about our criminality, I am convinced that the answer to that fear is not capital punishment. A response with an act we forbid is inconsistent to say the least. If we want to reduce or prevent murders, we must deal with deeper concerns such as economic inequities, alcohol or drug abuse, which is a major factor in road accidents, and an appalling rate of suicide including a majority of young people.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if the rate of manslaughters reaches 2.7 in 100,000 people in Canada, it might be important to remember that the rate of suicide is 13.8 in 100,000 people also.

Nothing has shown at any rate that the demise of capital punishment in the past 10 years has resulted in an increase in the number of manslaughters. And no one has proven that