

Criminal Code

saying the offender is a great man and his life is worth that of two ordinary citizens. This is how ridiculous the question is. The question will boil down to this if we allow ourselves to be swayed by the emotion of a few sentimental lawyers and a few sentimental thinkers.

We must look at this matter in as clearcut a manner as possible. We must look at it as unemotionally as possible. I stated at the outset of my remarks that I do not like some of the trends in justice that are evolving. I think the evolution which came about as a result of the changes in the Criminal Code in 1961 was a proper and just one. We set out two categories, non-capital murder and capital murder. I am in wholehearted agreement with that. I do not think that change in the Criminal Code, however, has been properly tested since it was brought about in 1961.

Ever since 1963 we have had commutations. How great a deterrent is a death penalty which never will be enforced so long as the present members of the cabinet are in their seats? How great a deterrent is that? It is no deterrent at all, or practically none. Some members have spoken in this debate and have said that if this resolution involving life imprisonment is adopted, life imprisonment is equal to the death penalty. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent) in opening the debate stated that life imprisonment is just as much a deterrent as the death penalty. He went on to say that the death penalty is no greater deterrent than anything else. This resolution does not state we shall substitute a life sentence for the death penalty. This resolution states that we will put in place of the death penalty life imprisonment with the possibility of parole on approval of the Governor in Council, a different matter altogether.

• (7:00 p.m.)

What does that mean? Past experience indicates that these prisoners spend between nine and twelve years in prison, depending on whether their behaviour is good or bad, and they may spend as much as thirteen or fourteen years behind bars.

I always like to simplify things so that I may understand them. In this year, 1966, syndicated crime is moving into Canada and this is not the time for us to abolish capital punishment or to make things easier for these criminals. In recent years we have had evidence of bodies being buried in lime in Quebec. We are all familiar with the McLaughlan case in Vancouver and the fact

that the two people who were to appear in court on a narcotics charge were murdered yesterday. Surely I need say nothing more, because it is obvious that syndicated crime is moving into Canada.

Should we make things easier for criminals, and should we make the laws weaker, encouraging contract killing? Many people have talked about the greatest deterrent in Canada to murder. What does the Mafia have as its deterrent to keep their gangs on the straight and narrow, to keep them from squealing or going soft on the job? I suggest they use the death penalty. Their members either stay in line or they are rubbed out. They are encased in cement and dropped to the bottom of a river, or put somewhere else where they are not seen again. Torture is not used and life imprisonment is not used,—and I am sure the crime syndicates could impose life imprisonments if they wanted to, but it would be a great nuisance. Their ultimate deterrent is the death penalty.

If that analogy is a good one, then society's greatest deterrent is the death penalty. We in this country have not reached the point that we do not need a deterrent. In recent years we have all observed that crime is becoming of major concern to the citizens of this country, as evidenced as recently as yesterday by the killings in Vancouver.

In view of all these facts, I have reached the conclusion that now is not the time to abolish capital punishment. Our society has not reached that point at which we can forget about this ultimate deterrent to murder. It is my duty in this house, not to protect my interests or necessarily the interests of my family, but to protect society. I certainly feel that if we in this house vote in favour of this resolution we will be doing a disservice to society and, in fact, weakening the moral fibre on which we depend so much to protect ourselves and the citizens of this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. J.-A. Mongrain (Trois-Rivières): First, Mr. Speaker, I want the house to know that I do not intend to take up much of its time or to repeat all that has already been so well said concerning the abolition of the death penalty.

But I do wish to congratulate the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) and the party leaders who decided together that party lines would not enter into this discussion and that the vote would be free. And even if this has nothing to do with this debate, Mr. Speaker, I