

[English]

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on third reading of Bill C-84. I have spoken before on this subject, and rather forcefully, so I certainly do not intend to pursue the matter now at any great length.

I am well aware that this is an absolutely free vote and that it is up to the conscience of each and every member as to how he or she should vote on Wednesday afternoon. I am also aware that the votes of some members of the House are freer than those of others. But we shall wait and see what happens on Wednesday afternoon. I might add that I am not too optimistic of the outcome. Nevertheless, I want to put on record a few points which I believe to be important.

Most of us went back to our ridings over the weekend. I did so myself and I attended four or five different functions. Among them were two funerals. Believe it or not, I was cornered even at the funerals. Notwithstanding the sadness of the occasion, people found it necessary to express their views loud and clear with regard to Bill C-84. I stated my position, in turn, and needless to say it agreed with what a great many of my constituents were saying.

I believe capital punishment should be imposed in cases where the jury has made no recommendations for mercy and when the cabinet, in its wisdom, declines to commute the death sentence. Especially do I think the death penalty is appropriate in the following cases: First, the murder of prison guards in the execution of their duty or while off-duty if the murder is related to their duty; second, the murder of police officers in the execution of their duty or while off-duty if the murder is related to their duty; third, murder committed by persons whose records include one or more convictions for violent acts; fourth, pre-meditated murder or contract murder. I am thinking here of mafia-type murders committed by a "hit man" who knows what he is doing; he is a gangster, he shows no mercy, he probably does not even know who he is killing, but does so because there is a \$5,000 or \$10,000 payment for his services. Then fifth, where death is directly attributable to a crime of violence where the possibility of death occurring is great and where, in fact, death does occur.

I might say, with regard to that last category, that I am thinking of armed hold-ups where the hold-up men go in with machine-guns and automatic weapons, well knowing what they intend to do. In my opinion, the death penalty should be applicable in such cases.

Let me repeat what I have said earlier. I believe hanging to be a brutal and barbarous way of taking life. I believe executions should be carried out in the most humane way possible. I have suggested that a drug be injected so that the criminal could be painlessly removed from society with as little fuss as possible and as humanely as possible. Those who favour abolition usually talk about hanging, the scaffold, the horror of the rope, and so on. This comes from the press and from the media generally. Most of the news media seem to be abolitionist, bleeding hearts that worry more about the criminal than the victim. I have been surprised to read in editorial pages a great number of letters from citizens of Canada. If the media have received the same number that I have received, I am sure they

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would agree that the writers favour by ten to one the retention of some form of capital punishment.

● (1620)

When we vote on Wednesday, let us remember that there are 11 men on death row awaiting the outcome of the vote. On that basis I would say we should start afresh following the vote. These men who have gone through terrible agonies wondering whether their lives will be taken or not should have their sentences commuted, and if the bill is defeated capital punishment should be retained from there on for the crimes I have outlined, as well as for high treason. A good many members who are abolitionists at heart, I am sure feel that 15 years in prison—not 25 years—is an inadequate penalty for the crime of high treason, especially in view of the fact that this sentence may be further reduced on the unanimous decision of three judges. The same is true of hijacking or piracy. In my view, the hijackers of aircraft who cold-bloodedly kill the unfortunate passengers who are taken as hostages should also receive the ultimate penalty.

I hope a good many of my colleagues who voted for the bill will seriously reconsider their position when the final, third reading vote is taken. I should like to read into the record a letter I received from a friend of mine who I met a month or so ago. He wrote me a personal letter and also sent me a copy of a letter that he addressed to the editor of the *Globe and Mail* under date June 24. He writes:

Dear Sir:

Geoffrey Stevens' article "A Day of High Drama" is an example of the hyperbole of which he is capable and further represents the "bleeding heart" socialist that he is.

Yesterday was not a great day for parliament as the vote registered did not represent a "free vote" as publicized but rather the imperious will of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Yesterday was the beginning of the end of any semblance to a democratic state. There may have been free votes to a degree in the opposition parties but within the Liberal party enough coercion was exercised by the Prime Minister who by his "supreme power" can and does reward with position and favour those who agree with him and remove those who do not.

Stevens is wrong constitutionally, ethically and morally. An elected member of parliament is duty bound to present the views of his constituents who did or did not elect him. To indicate that the fundamental duty of an elected member is to make "his own best decision" and ignore the people is also fatuous and without credence. It suggests a feudal state of primitive nature where only the elected have intellectual capacity and, therefore, will think, decide and dictate to an ignorant compliant mass.

The reference to Edmund Burke circa 1765 and his famous or infamous Bristol statement, which along with stating that elected members should make their own decisions (and inferred "to hell with the people"—Stevens) neglected to point out that Burke also stated that "he should be representative not delegate. He should attend to their interest but he must address himself to the general good of the whole community" etc.

It is also a matter of record that Burke made this statement while the elected member of parliament for Bristol but failed to retain the confidence of his constituents and lost his seat. His further re-entrance to parliament was in a "pocket borough" controlled by Lord Rockingham one of the Whig (Liberal) leaders of the time.

I would suggest that all members of parliament who are voting for the "abolition of capital punishment" and by so doing ignored the intelligent wishes of over 80 per cent of all unfettered Canadians be soundly defeated at the polls, whenever the next election is called. I would also suggest that the issue of capital punishment be put to the Canadian public at the same time.

Yours truly,
J. Douglas Wilson