

*Capital Punishment*

law is more interested in the rights of criminals than it is in victims. These are legitimate fears and questions to be addressed. I perceive that these are questions of which people on both sides of this debate are seized as Members of Parliament in Canada.

There was, for example, a report on the television program *60 Minutes* recently about a notorious murderer known as Austin Choker who murdered a string of women by choking and then beating them mercilessly. He was caught and sentenced to a term totalling 123 years. After eight years, a parole board released him on a two to one decision. He went to Houston and immediately resumed his trade. He attacked two women. Fortunately, he was caught and is now back behind bars. In interviews, the two victims expressed horror that such a notorious killer could be paroled after eight years. Their conclusion was that the law did not care about them as law-abiding citizens. This happened in the United States, but people in Canada relate to these things and worry about them.

The only way to assure people that the law is on their side is by example. Those on the front line in the fight against crime—police officers, prison officers and others—must be given adequate protection, even it means changing the law. Training techniques need to be vastly improved. We are lucky to be a nation of great scientific and technological achievement. We can avail our law enforcement agencies of the latest techniques in crime fighting.

I hope that this debate will underline the fact that our criminal justice system needs to be improved. But we need not become an inhumane society in the process. Criminals can be dealt with firmly and effectively. And, if need be, our parole system should be strengthened. Those who have expertise in the field can study this system and bring us the necessary changes. We should not encourage types like Austin Choker. Perhaps it may be in our interest to have judges or representatives from the Justice Department sit on parole boards.

The range of new ideas is limitless. I suggest that we explore them, that we use the scientific and social resources of our fast developing nation, of this vast knowledge explosion, that we begin to understand how much we have moved in behaviour modification and in the whole understanding of our society in the last decade, to say nothing of the last quarter century.

It is interesting, and Canadians will be aware of this, that as this debate has gone on through the media and here in Parliament through many months, polls are changing. I find again and again that men and women in conversation agree on what is the problem and what is the medicine. Because of this fear, concern and anxiety, capital punishment has suddenly become the cure-all. I plead that out of this debate we may have a renewed resolve to use the technological and the sociological tools available to us to support those who seek to bring law and order into our community and to maintain it. I, with others who will vote against this motion, obviously wish to be on the side with all parliamentarians in building a better

Canada, in seeking to light a candle rather than to curse the darkness.

**Mr. Alan Redway (York East):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively and with great interest to the Hon. Member for Waterloo (Mr. McLean), for whom I have the greatest respect. I was taken with his comments, particularly about his ideas of strengthening the criminal justice system as an alternative to capital punishment.

I too am one who believes that this is an important objective and one that we should not only be investigating wholeheartedly, but turning into something positive so that we can reassure the people to whom the Hon. Member was referring, those who are afraid, who have concerns, who are perhaps terrorized by the reports that they receive when reading about violent crime, particularly murder. I must say, however, that I have become very discouraged about the potential of reassuring people by strengthening the criminal justice system in other ways.

I would like to refer the Hon. Member to a situation which occurred a very few weeks ago in Canada, not in the United States. This is not the case of an Austin Choker, this is the case of a Rheel Chartrand.

As the Hon. Member will recall, Rheel Chartrand was convicted of first degree murder of a police officer at a time when capital punishment was the penalty for first degree murder of a police officer in Canada. Of course, capital punishment was repealed while Mr. Chartrand was awaiting the ultimate penalty. He was then sentenced to serve the full penalty for first degree murder under the present law, namely, 25 years imprisonment. Recently as the Hon. Member is aware, Mr. Chartrand applied through his lawyers to a jury in the community where the murder had taken place to ask for the right to apply for parole after serving some 15 years of his sentence. The jury, which knew all the facts relating to this man awaiting execution, who had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment, decided that he should be eligible for parole and granted him the right to apply. We do not know whether that parole will be granted by the National Parole Board, but we know now that he has that right to do it.

Does the Hon. Member agree with that process? Does he believe that someone convicted of first degree murder of a police officer in those circumstances should be entitled to parole after 15 years? If he does, does the Member think that that is the way we will reassure the citizens of Canada and return their faith in our criminal justice system?

**Mr. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) for his very helpful question and illustration. One of the obvious needs is the question of confidence building measures in the population. The question of strengthening criminal prevention has to do not only with the perpetrator of crime and the victim, but also with the community.