

*Capital Punishment*

Mr. Speaker, I care so much about human life and much—

**An Hon. Member:** Me too!

**Mr. Rossi:** I do not know who said “me too”, but I for one care about it and to prove it. I was talking about the work of a policeman, because I do not think that in this House, with due respect for all Hon. Members, we hear about statistics. You have been listening to statistics all evening, Mr. Speaker. Some say there have been fewer murders since the death penalty has been abolished. Others say the number has doubled. Well, I think everybody will agree that statistics mean what we want them to mean. But in real life, on the scene, on the battleground one knows what a human life is. And I was there when some guys departed for a better world, Mr. Speaker.

And I remember very vividly because I was a human being even though I was a police officer, first and foremost I was a human being. Some radio commentators who know me will remember this incident because they were there with me.

There was an individual, who had taken a 20-year old girl as hostage in an hotel in the eastern part of Montreal. I am called on the premises at 11.30 p.m., almost at midnight. After three hours of negotiations, the man let the young girl go and tells me: “Mr. Rossi, give me half an hour. I have just escaped from a 10-year bid—he meant 10 years of penitentiary—give me half an hour Mr. Rossi, I want to smoke a cigarette and I will kick off.” He meant that life was finished for him. Let me tell you, that I was human as all other police officers. I made his cellmate come out to try to convince him to give up without killing himself. A human life had to be protected. Now the said convict . . . you are signalling me, Mr. Speaker, but I began at 9.33 p.m., unless I cannot read the time. Well, 33. Excuse me.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that man killed himself. He shot himself. We did everything to save his life.

There is another thing that people do not know when I refer to parole. There is something that the people do not know about capital punishment. Several Members in this House do not know it. Do you know that inmates hate jail more than capital punishment? They would rather be hanged than remain in prison. So, capital punishment will not be a deterrent for them. Far from it!

A gangster, a thief, a murderer, must be punished. What is the use of a 12-member jury, a judge, a platoon of lawyers, and the expenditure of a small fortune if, after he is found guilty and sentenced by the judge to 15 years in jail, he comes out after six years? Like some other Hon. Members, I believe that we should have a reform of the prison system, we should be less lenient and when someone is sentenced . . . It is clear, as I said earlier, that the guy behind bars will co-operate. He is going to be a real good guy. However, he is not the same back on the street, Mr. Speaker.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I will say that my position is clear, I am against capital punishment. I would say that

despite the very good speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney)—I say very good because, in my humble opinion, it is a good thing to be for all forms of human life and I congratulate him—I cannot praise him for having said that he would give every single Member of this House the opportunity to voice their opinion in this debate on human life. He even said: “Please, Hon. Members, do not let yourselves be swayed by public opinion, vote according to your conscience.” Do you have a conscience, ladies and gentlemen of this House? Or is your conduct dictated by opinion polls?

Do not worry! If you have the confidence of your constituents and if they value your judgment, you will be re-elected, even if you voted according to the polls. Thank you. I am against capital punishment.

**Mr. Schellenberg:** Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague for Bourassa.

[*English*]

I understand the turmoil that my hon. colleague has gone through in changing his opinion of some months ago on the capital punishment issue. I sincerely respect the comments he has made tonight. I want to compliment him on his service to the people of Montreal in his former life as one of the new centurians and in his present life as a Member in this Chamber.

The Member mentioned the right of the state to kill and how wrong that was. As he is fully aware, in extreme circumstances our nation and other nations give soldiers the right to kill. In every day circumstances our nation gives our policemen the right to kill. Would he comment on what would happen in this country if we took away that right, the protection we have in our police forces?

Would he also comment on the comments his colleague, the Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan), made earlier today? That Member said that the one case in which he can support capital punishment is that of those who have murdered, are in prison, and essentially face no further penalty for killing prison guards or policemen. How does he feel about that issue?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rossi:** Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like first of all to say that my friend and neighbour down the hall did not quite understand my remarks. I did say “except for the state, as in times of war and so on—”

But at no time, when he says that permission is given to police officers to—and I quote:

[*English*]

—permission is given to police officers to kill. That is very wrong, Mr. Speaker. No police officer is given permission to kill. When a police officer is sworn in, he swears to protect life. To protect life means to protect the life of any human being, whether he is a thief, a priest or your son. You are sworn to