

Capital Punishment

the Member for Lisgar who spoke with such conviction about why he has changed his mind since 1976.

I believe it would be profoundly wrong for Canada to join the company of such countries as Iraq, Iran, the Soviet Union, South Africa and Chile, nations which retain capital punishment as the ultimate punishment. Canada would indeed be the only nation in the western world to legislatively reinstate capital punishment after having abolished it.

In 1983 the Parliament of the United Kingdom, dominated overwhelmingly by Conservatives with a Prime Minister who strongly supports capital punishment, voted solidly to reject the reinstatement of capital punishment in that country. Just a few weeks ago that same Parliament voted once again, even more strongly, by a margin of 342 to 230, to reject the reinstatement of capital punishment in Britain.

We have to ask ourselves again that basic question, the question that goes right to the core of this issue, the question that is asked by the church leaders in Canada; "Why kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?" It is as stark and as fundamental as that, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

I must point out that all major religious groups in Canada, including the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Anglican Church, the United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, the Canadian Unitarian Council, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Mennonite Central Committee and the Religious Society of Friends, all officially support the abolition of capital punishment. Pope John Paul II himself has said he is firmly opposed to capital punishment.

[*English*]

Recently this House was honoured by the presence of the widow of Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King. Speaking as a Christian she said:

I believe in the power of transformation and that we as Christians have an obligation to try to work for a reconciliation where it is at all possible.—

I regret very much that our country is moving backwards instead of continuing to move forward on the capital punishment issue. I will continue to speak out against the death penalty, because I think it is barbaric for a civilized nation such as the United States. . . . I certainly hope Canada will not fall into that.

As was said previously, we must surely recognize the sanctity and the value of all human life in our society. In doing so we must ask ourselves why it is that we as a society, as a Parliament, should single out, in particular, murder in terms of the cause of death in our society. In fact, it is quite appropriate that I should be speaking today, April 28, which is the annual day of mourning for workers who are killed and injured on the job. There are more workers killed in Canada on the job each year than Canadians who are murdered.

In 1985, for example, 768 Canadians lost their lives on the job. The fatality rate in Canada for high-risk occupations is staggering. Fishing, the most dangerous occupation in Canada, takes 207 people per 100,000. Forestry takes 129 per 100,000,

mining takes 122 per 100,000 and construction takes 48 per 100,000. I am from the Province of British Columbia and already this year 11 men have been killed on the job in the forests of British Columbia. In 1986, despite a lengthy industrial strike, 37 men were killed, six of them chewed up by machines in mill accidents. In 1985, 35 were killed. Similarly in the mining industry, recently four lives were lost in a mine in Sudbury. As said by NDP, MPP Elie Martel, who has fought for years for better occupational health and safety laws, "Miners' deaths go unreported. We kill them like they are black flies".

Let us place a value on all human life in our society and recognize that we must take effective steps to stop death and to prevent violent death however it may occur. An average of 12 people die every year in house fires on Indian reserves in British Columbia alone. Those are preventable deaths. Many more people die at their own hand, suicide, than die as a result of murder. In British Columbia last year, 28 boys and nine girls, teenagers, took their own lives. We must recognize this situation and take steps as a society to deal with that cause of violent death. We must deal with death in traffic accidents and death at the hands of drunk drivers, all far more common.

• (1250)

Of course we value and must protect the lives of prison guards and police officers, but all life is sacred. The state has no right to terminate any human life.

[*Translation*]

As was said last year by Normand Bergeron, Quebec City Chief of Police, if a community deplores an act as barbaric as the murder of two police officers, how can we, as representatives of our society, recommend another equally barbaric act? This would make no sense at all. Mr. Speaker, the Chief of Police of the Montreal Urban Community, Rolland Bourget, spoke out against reinstating the death penalty. He said: Personally, I am against the death penalty.

[*English*]

It has been 25 years since the last execution in Canada. It has been 11 years since this Parliament voted to abolish capital punishment. The onus lies squarely on those who would reinstate the death penalty to demonstrate that conditions have changed in such a way as to call into question that decision. There is no evidence whatsoever to support that argument. Fundamentally, there is no evidence to suggest that capital punishment would deter violent death or murder in Canada. Indeed, the Conservative Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) said the following recently:

Where you have a penalty it should be demonstrated to be a deterrent with respect to the activity for which it is a penalty. There has been no increase in the incidence of homicide or murder since the abolition of capital punishment has taken place.

Similar statements have been made by Canadian chiefs of police who recognize that deterrence is not a viable argument.