

Capital Punishment

were hanged. If I may, I would like to quote a rather important passage:

"Mr. Kenneth Avio, 44, professor of economics at the University of Victoria, reported during an interview that he had discovered many memos from the Department of Indian Affairs recommending hanging for native murderers because, in the case of Indians, for instance, there was a special need for a deterrent. There is no doubt that if you had the misfortune to be a native Canadian, there was a greater risk of being executed, notes Professor Avio, adding that Ukrainians and Eastern Europeans ran the second greatest risk of being hanged if found guilty of murder."

I am not the one to say so. This study was carried out by Professor Avio. I have no reason to question his facts. This should tell us something. We have to remember that each of us has some racist feelings and some violent leanings, and that we each control these weaknesses differently and in various degrees.

When we are dealing with the justice of men, can we make certain that the men who administer this justice will be so perfect that they can put aside all such weaknesses?

Mr. Desjardins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Hon. Members for Bourassa and Gatineau in congratulating the Hon. Member for Portneuf for the quality and clarity of his speech. I know that he has consulted, like many Members of this House, various youth and senior citizens' organizations in his constituency and I congratulate him on his thoroughness.

I would like to ask the Hon. Member what he thinks about an argument much used by those who favour reinstatement, which argument can most effectively be described as the economic argument. According to this argument, a criminal who is in prison for twenty or twenty-five years costs the state a lot of money, and it is therefore better to eliminate or kill him to get rid of this burden on society.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this economic argument which we often hear to justify the killing of human beings by the state.

Mr. Ferland: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as my dear colleague is suggesting, the economic factor is raised very often and I heard it on many occasions. What is the use of spending \$57,000 or \$60,000 a year to keep a criminal behind bars? But the other side of the coin is the choice our society has to make: should we eliminate an individual because he is a financial burden on society?

We need only consider the many institutions where we keep the chronically ill, psychopaths, violent and extremely dangerous patients. We keep them in institutions. We do not call that a prison, we call that a psychiatric institution. Yet society is paying for this and we know these people are irrecoverable. Should we put a price on that? Are those people candidates for mercy killing?

As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, there is a certain society, there was a war in 1939-44 when certain individuals attempted to set up a new order and solve problems through racism, where people were eliminated one way or another. They tried to eliminate people who were costing society some money. Then there was the Nuremberg trial. Sooner or later we get to the point where we ask ourselves: Are we prepared to go that far? Is Canadian society reaching the point where we consider doing away with people who are costing us money? I would not think so, Mr. Speaker. What Canadians want and look forward to is something other than that.

I do not think that the monetary aspect should be taken into account in the choice our society has to make.

Mrs. Bourgault: Just a couple of questions, Mr. Speaker. My colleague from Portneuf is known to be a very convinced and often very convincing man.

Now could my colleague from Portneuf tell me whether in his study of capital punishment he has given any consideration to compensation for the victims? You know, compensation is an aspect which comes up now and then and is the subject of many discussions. In my riding, for example, I often hear people talking about it and I am sure other Members have had similar experiences. Mr. Speaker, our constituents do not understand why an inmate sentenced to life imprisonment should be set free after seven years. People have the impression that our judiciary system is unduly permissive.

So could my colleague tell me whether he has given this matter any thought? Has he considered the possibility of finding a way to compensate the victims?

Mr. Ferland: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Argenteuil—Papineau. Indeed, we must look at the matter of compensation for victims.

But when we bring in capital punishment to compensate for the murder of an innocent, I do not think that will solve the problem of victim compensation. Because I do not believe the State can revive someone after he has been murdered. That is not the direction we should be taking.

If we are considering compensating people who are the victims of crime, this is something we might have to look at. Yes, I agree we should look at that. And that is the direction we should be looking at. We should be looking in the direction of "Crime does not pay". We should have a fair justice. But not a kind of justice that will eliminate an individual, that will kill. The 282 Members in this House, the 282 individuals who share the power of life and death in this country should not imagine that by re-establishing capital punishment, man's vengeance onto man, we will be re-establishing fairness where a crime has been committed. That is not true, Mr. Speaker, it is not the solution, we should be looking at. Quite the opposite, we must work at reforming the Canadian criminal system, our judicial system in Canada. But we must never go into the opposite direction and say that we will re-establish the law of