

degrading tactic of playing cheap politics with the issue of capital punishment. I see no harm in that being said in the House. He has made statements which he must know are not accurate. The distortion, the innuendo and the smear are approaches hardly worthy of his office. I hope that before this debate concludes he will do what the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) has said he has already done, namely, reaffirm to this House that it is indeed a free vote in so far as the government is concerned.

The legislation, I think, fails to seriously come to grips with the question of capital punishment. If it is passed into law it will succeed only in perpetuating for another five years the state of suspended animation that has existed during the past five years. During the last five years, this government has made it quite clear that it has no intention of allowing capital punishment to be carried out in this country, regardless of what parliament happens to decide. This has been clearly illustrated by the fact that during this time all those who have been sentenced to death for murder of a police officer have had their sentence changed to life imprisonment, despite the fact that the law in force which we are now being asked to extend provides the death penalty for such crimes. So, in effect, this House is being asked to pass something that had been disregarded and will continue to be disregarded by this government. In many ways this debate, therefore, is becoming an exercise in futility. But at the same time it is a perfect illustration of how the government can show contempt for the decisions made by the House of Commons of this country.

I should like to place on record the views of my constituents on the subject of capital punishment as shown by the result of a survey taken in the riding of Leeds a while ago. I sent a questionnaire to just over 20,000 homes which is the total number of homes in my constituency. I received between 6,000 and 7,000 replies, a fact which clearly shows the great public concern about this subject. It can scarcely be argued that this is not a greater response than usually is received to surveys or questionnaires of this type. Furthermore, I do not believe the accuracy of the result can be disputed since the number of replies represents well over 30 per cent of all the households in my constituency. If the Gallup Poll can accurately assess the views of the entire country by sampling less than 1,000 persons in the whole nation, the views of the constituency of Leeds are most accurately reflected by the sampling of 6,000 to 7,000 homes. Ten per cent of those responding in Leeds favoured complete abolition of capital punishment. One and one-half per cent found themselves unable to make a definite decision.

**Mr. Nelson:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Leeds is using misleading and inaccurate information. A home cannot vote. If a questionnaire goes to a house there could be six voters in that house. There are 88,000 voters in my constituency. My homes cannot vote. My voters vote.

**Mr. Cossitt:** I do not follow the point the hon. member is trying to make. I must object to his statement that I am misrepresenting the situation. I am not. I made the simple statement that I sent a questionnaire to 20,000 homes in my constituency and received between 6,000 and 7,000 replies. I certainly take exception to the hon. member

### *Capital Punishment*

saying I am misleading the House. I can assure the House that is something I would never do.

**Mr. Nelson:** On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I did not intend to imply that the member was misleading the House intentionally. If I may address the hon. member through you, Sir, my point is that I think he said that a certain number of questionnaires were sent to so many households which indicated that they were in favour of capital punishment. A household is made up of people. Presumably a meeting is held in the household and the people in the household fill in the one questionnaire.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure all hon. members see the point made by the hon. member who rose on the point of order and also the point made by the hon. member for Leeds. Perhaps we may assume the matter has been resolved and allow the hon. member to pursue the substance of his speech.

**Mr. Cossitt:** I might explain that many of the replies on the questionnaires which were returned contained information that there were four or five people living in the house, two of whom thought such and such and two of whom thought otherwise. In other words, I believe there was a very clear indication of what the people in Leeds thought. The hon. member tells us that people live in households. I never doubted that. As I said, ten per cent of those responding favoured the complete abolition of capital punishment. One and one-half per cent found themselves unable to make a definite decision on the question. Eighty-eight and a half per cent favoured retention of capital punishment in full or to some degree. Of this latter group, 80.9 per cent favoured the retention of capital punishment completely and 19.1 per cent favoured retention for the murder of police officers and prison guards.

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I believe that the over-all conclusion to be drawn from the results of a survey of this type is that there exists very definite public rebellion against what is viewed as a too permissive society. In some ways, stronger support for retention of capital punishment is a reflection of a strong demand for a return in this country to what perhaps we too commonly and simply call law and order. But I should like also to mention that a great number of persons answering the questionnaires said that our bail and parole regulations are too easy.

A further point that was made abundantly clear by my constituents was that many who are now asking at this time for full retention of capital punishment might well be prepared to consider supporting abolition if life imprisonment really meant what these words imply, namely, imprisonment for the rest of the offender's natural life. They do not want convicted murderers paroled to walk the streets again in a few years time after commission of the crime. I might add that this view has become more evident as a result of the events of the past few days. If there were first a complete overhaul of our penitentiary system in Canada to put an end to this government's "easy exit" policy, many of my constituents might support abolition.

There are those who have criticized the Association of Canadian Police Chiefs and other law enforcement groups because they have taken a strong stand in favour of