

against delinquent juveniles, for instance, and have found that our law does not have the teeth it should have to react to the kind of situation that we have imposed on our system as the result of the permissive society.

I should like to touch briefly on the climate which may exist inside our prisons as a result of the abolition of capital punishment and if the amendment, which would at least protect prison guards and policemen, is not passed tonight. Already we have news of the massive resignations of prison guards who guard some of the institutions in the province of Quebec.

Inside our prisons there will be a massive deterioration in morale and a brand new approach will have to be adopted. We will have to train a new generation of prison officials and we will have to find new ways of handling this new phenomenon. As is the case in countries where capital punishment is no longer in existence, some prison guards will make an unholy alliance with some of the dangerous criminals inside prison to avail themselves of their protection against others. The situation will be very serious. The only person who would really be safe inside the prison will be the prisoner himself.

The Solicitor General has brought before parliament measures to create new facilities for maximum security institutions which are now outmoded and outdated. Certainly the institutions which we need today to isolate criminals from our society are not adequate, never mind the situation that will exist after we bring in this new stage of permissiveness into our system. I fear that it will be indeed a cruel and unusual punishment for a person to join the public service in the service of prison administration because he or she will really be in danger if this amendment is rejected today.

Since I do not wish to abuse the privilege that has been extended to me by yourself and my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I wish to conclude by expressing my concern about the fact that some of our colleagues who favour abolition of capital punishment have attacked those of us who have spoken in favour of retention as appearing to be barbarians. I have not been present during all the debate but I believe that none of my colleagues who have spoken here are really barbarians. Each one of us would much rather have afforded himself the luxury of total abolition if indeed we could offer the people whom we represent some hope of not being afraid to send our children out into the streets after dark, some hope that there is some way of dealing effectively with the criminal element or with the professional killer. None of them are advocating that we should broaden the imposition of capital punishment to persons convicted of first degree murder or premeditated murder.

Most speakers who have expressed their views in support of retention have said they would be happy if the existing law were permanently enshrined. I would like to see the present law extended in the case of treason and one or two other crimes. That is why it is so important that hon. members should support the amendment that capital punishment be retained for the murder of prison guards and policemen. It is the minimum we can settle for now.

If we look at the statistics since capital punishment was suspended in Canada, because it has not been effectively administered since 1961 when the last person was hanged,

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we find that 18 people should have been hanged, but none has been. Again, let us try to equate that number with the hundreds of people who have been murdered by criminals who have committed a second offence, or by people who have been found guilty of crimes of a lesser degree. When the Solicitor General tells us that we might be making a mistake, we might be hanging the wrong person, let him remember that there is only one chance in a million of this, but it is quite obvious from the statistics that there is a very good chance that one person in three who has been convicted of a capital crime and incarcerated for a limited period of time will go out and do it again, if he has not already done it within the prison.

● (2020)

I appeal to my hon. friends in the House here tonight seriously to consider supporting this very essential and important amendment and to give some protection for a further period of time to those upon whom we call when we find ourselves in difficulty and when we find ourselves confronted by the criminal element, by the organized criminal, by the paid criminal, and by the criminal who shows wanton disregard for any moral or human standards within our society. We should show some concern and commit ourselves to standing behind them when they carry out their duties, and when they often act beyond the call of duty to intervene on our behalf against these elements. We owe it to them because otherwise we cannot expect them to do their work as effectively and as efficiently as we have become accustomed to expect of them up to this time.

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, consideration of amendments to the bill before the House leads us to serious thinking, since we should ask ourselves a good question: how is it that we have reached such an impasse and that Parliament finds it so very difficult to get out of it. The vote of principle taken at the second reading stage of the bill on June 22 last, is a good illustration of this impasse, in the sense that we realized that the House was divided almost exactly in two sections. But, when considering the reasons that have caused a faction of the House to vote in favour of the abolition of capital punishment, we find that the stakes have been altered.

The reason why these stakes have been altered are irrelevant to the basic principles involved when we are discussing whether or not to abolish capital punishment. I say they are independent from the only reasons that should concern us since they are the exclusive result of one man's ambitions and ideology, and that man happens to be the Prime Minister of Canada. As the leader of our party (Mr. Caouette) said this afternoon when he had the opportunity to take part in this debate, we can ask ourselves: who requested the abolition of the death penalty, how is it that while 90 per cent of Canadians openly support the retention of capital punishment, its abolition is being proposed?

Some hon. Members: That is not true!

Mr. Matte: Members opposite are shouting: that is not true. I challenge the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Marceau) to make a double investigation in his constituency