

On various occasions, several persons familiar with the situation in Canada demanded the holding of a referendum to provide the people of Canada with an opportunity to give their opinion on the question of retention or abolition of capital punishment. It is unfortunate that those who have been in power for the last five years did not organize such a referendum on the subject. Considering the present situation, I think that the majority of the people I represent share my position, if I consider the many answers I received to the questionnaire I sent. A very small percentage seemed to be in favour of abolition while the majority pronounced themselves in favour of retention of capital punishment.

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I have had various suggestions as to the methods of execution to be used and most people would be prepared to recommend the use of the gas chamber. I might add that I favor this opinion. I also want to indicate that I cannot find any explanation for the attitude held by those who claim that capital punishment may be maintained for some categories of people. I do not see how one may assess different values to the lives of a father or a mother, of a policeman or a warden, of an industrialist or a businessman, of a poor man or a rich man. Everybody has a right to live. This moratorium which allows for a mitigated justice comes to an end in 1976, and this is why this bill has been brought back before this House. I have here an article which was published in the March 24, 1976, issue of *La Presse*, signed by a Mr. Gaston Gagnier from LaSalle. I think it would be in order at this stage to quote from this article. It reads as follows:

We consider that the law will continue to be inadequate as long as all armed bandits caught in the act will not be liable to the death penalty. Criminals who rob banks or hijack Brinks-type armoured cars are real live arsenals. A machine-gun is not exactly a charm attached to the chain of one's watch. These people are therefore potential killers. Such madmen will not hesitate to mow down everybody if they fear being captured. Their crimes are therefore premeditated, and any accomplice, whether or not he is where the action takes place, bears the same responsibility. If a criminal knew that he is risking capital punishment, he would give second thought to what he intends to do before getting involved in a criminal operation.

And further on, in the same article:

Certain eager abolitionist ministers have already stated publicly that they would resign rather than enact such a radical legislation. This is sheer political blackmail. Well, they will just have to go. Canada and justice will only be better off.

In many areas, we have not been careful enough. It is as if all the methods of publicity are being used to bring society to adapt itself to a system which is all wrong. After having contributed, unconcernedly, to such a *laissez faire* situation as regards the publication and sale of newspapers and magazines and the showing on television of films in which criminals sometimes are made to look like heroes, thus giving to the developing mind the most striking examples of crimes, thefts and various other disorders that are rampant in this world, after having through carelessness allowed into this country certain categories of undesirable immigrants, we panic at seeing the consequences of our stupidity. In various occasions, our courts of justice become the scenes of all kinds of provocations.

Even in this House, we often hear discussions in which the scandalmongering of some of our colleagues is not

### *Capital Punishment*

likely to instill any sense of respect towards the established authority in the minds of our fellow-citizens. Can we now say that all has been done to make life as pleasant as possible, for all the citizens of this country on which God has bestowed unlimited riches? The members of Parliament should settle down to this specific task with the firm determination to succeed, instead of wasting their time in trying to determine whether we should abolish or maintain the death penalty. For the time being, it would be much wiser to give the people of Canada, a new hope for a better life by passing legislation which would be less materialistic and more human.

If we had a system which would make it possible for everybody to find a job or, at least, a healthy congenial occupation which would enable each individual to make an honest living, I have good reasons to believe that the crime rate would lessen. Obviously capital punishment cannot commend itself for its beauty; as soon as one pictures in one's mind a human being hanging, one is overwhelmed by a feeling of repulsion. If one does not react against this feeling, it promptly grows into a negative passion.

The danger is the same if we think about the parents of the murderer's victim, except that passion works the other way around. It then becomes impossible to discuss reasonably and consciously, or even to perceive the issue at stake. It is along this regrettable route that the controversy has been carried following the announcement that abolition legislation would be brought forth before the House. In all logic, one cannot call for abolition of a time honoured measure without invoking a first class rationale. I do not mean that the very longevity of this practice makes it necessarily venerable. But it has been challenged for over a century. Obviously the legislators that followed one another did not retain it by sadism.

We must then consider the arguments put forward up to now by the abolitionists. For some, it is only a remainder from barbarity. Others think in terms of niceties. They contrast hanging with the dignity of human life, the rigours of moral evolution, the humanitarian rehabilitation of murderers and others such nice concepts.

Medical efforts in recent years show beyond doubt a stronger respect for human life as well as increased concern for its protection and promotion: fight against cancer, heart transplants, gynecological research, blood banks. But there is another aspect of reality that daily life reveals as brutally: wars, pollution of environment, irrational and savage exploitation of the planet's resources, abortion, etc. In one hospital in Montreal, a medical team persists in trying to anticipate the viability threshold of the child to be born whereas in another department, abortion is performed. In the present confused system, the value of life is often brutally denied by changing behaviours, when necessary.

Thus, after talking at length of holy wars and just wars, we have come today to recognize the immorality of war—of any war. There is no future in wars for humankind. Unfortunately, we continued nevertheless to fight.

It is obvious that the numerous problems of criminality in our modern societies are not easy to solve. We know that imprisonment costs much money to citizens and that we must also account for the cost of police services which, in Quebec, according to reports published in a Montreal