

S. O. 21

wanted a different kind of examination of the issue of violent crime. It is not my impression that Canadians wanted to retreat to the dark ages, to the kind of primeval instincts that are being fanned by so many of the advocates of capital punishment. Canadians wanted something different from that, and hopefully it will be achieved.

To the great credit of many citizens of this country, members of the bar, members of the church organizations, the contrary arguments are being put forward. It is those who are responding to the claims being put forward by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) and others who favour capital punishment, and they are winning that debate in the various forums.

In order to ensure that the advocates of a more civilized, a more enlightened point of view are given the opportunity to win the debate on this issue, Parliament itself must be permitted to continue the debate. What is at stake, and what Parliament must fight for, is the right to continue the debate in that fashion. If the debate is allowed to continue, we will ultimately be able to secure the right choice in this House when we rise in our places to vote.

As the American experience shows, the reintroduction of capital punishment would lead to inequity and unfairness. When it comes to capital punishment, the law is not evenly applied. People do not have equal access to the better lawyers. Very often one's social standing, one's economic standing comes into play. The probability of a convicted murderer being executed is much higher where the murderer comes from a certain social, economic or ethnic group.

Is that what Canadians are prepared to accept in 1987? Are we prepared to build into the most irrevocable decision the state can make an implicit unfairness? Are we prepared to allow that to happen? Are we prepared to allow our legal system to become completely immobilized because the decision-makers will not want to take the ultimate step of invoking capital punishment?

One needs only to look at the situation in the United States, where we have thousands of people being kept on death row because no one wants to make the final decision. Yet, there these people sit, with this great uncertainty hanging over their heads.

We know from past experience in this country the amount of anguish that was expressed in the Cabinet room when it came to making a decision to invoke capital punishment or not. And how many sentences were plea-bargained down, or evaded? Consider how distorted the legal system becomes when capital punishment is available.

That is one of the clear results that we would bring about were we to pass this motion. Not only would we be doing the wrong thing, but we would be committing our legal system to an incredible degree of distortion and immobilization, to say nothing of the element of unfairness that would be built in.

These arguments have not been refuted, Mr. Speaker. All we seem to get is capital punishment for the sake of capital punishment—for the sake of capital punishment.

In that respect, it is interesting to note that virtually every religious organization and spokesperson across Canada has come out against this resolution. Those organizations speak with a unified voice on this issue. In terms of the fundamental moral beliefs, if it is the motive of the proponents of capital punishment to wreak vengeance, I remind them of the fundamental Biblical invocation, "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord". Only God has the right to make the ultimate decision. It is not for us, being as fallible as we are, to be making that kind of choice.

We entered into this debate, Mr. Speaker, with the belief that we would be given the time and opportunity to make our case. Once again, that faith is about to be broken. The threat of execution on the House and on further debate is the problem we face. It is double jeopardy, double capital punishment in both ways.

● (1100)

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as I say to Members opposite, if they really believe in what they are doing, then let the debate continue. Let every Canadian have the right to be heard because, in the end, right will prevail. Not only that, but justice and goodness will prevail if we are given the chance and time to do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being 11 o'clock, the House will now proceed with Members' statements, pursuant to Standing Order 21.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[*Translation*]

TAX REFORM

FUTURE OF POOR AND ELDERLY

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, again yesterday people were misled by this Government.

As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, in its last three Budgets the Government chose to raise taxes to the tune of \$20 a week for every Canadian. Yesterday the Minister came back and said: Well, I made a mistake, I am giving you \$6 back. However, as of next year I will take \$2 from you, but that is not all because, beginning in 1989, I intend to recuperate the other \$4 I gave you.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Budget is a shameful trick played on people. It is a shame because there are four million poor