

with it, when they say they are going to support this measure contrary to the wishes of their constituents. To me, their rationalization is a very strong argument for supporting the idea of a national referendum on this question.

Contrary to the views of the Solicitor General on a referendum, I do not feel such a vote should be held in a vacuum, but that prior to the poll there should be a wide-ranging debate all across the country during which all the information on the subject could be made available to the voter before he cast his ballot.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the argument against a referendum is a spurious one. Such arguments are only advanced to deny the people of the nation a chance to express themselves clearly on the subject. We find their representatives here denying their views for various reasons. I would say that at least the arguments are much stronger for a referendum on this subject than they were the last time such a device was used, which was when the Liberal government of the day polled the Canadian people on the question of conscription.

As for the measure itself, I do not see how anyone can support it. With respect to the abolitionists, it retains the principle of capital punishment; but probably they are depending on the continuation of the present Prime Minister's penchant for flouting laws with which he does not agree. In this case, though, it is hard to see how even he could have the gall to flout a law for which he is responsible. At least prior to last December it could be said that the reason for ignoring the law was that the Pearson government had placed it on the books. If this measure passes tonight, even that flimsy excuse will disappear. The retentionists are unhappy to see such double-standard legislation continued; they can only expect a continuation of the present *de facto* abolition situation if the measure passes.

Mr. Speaker, I should like now to say a few words about deterrence, because in my opinion that is the crux of this whole debate. The legislation recognizes the validity of this argument, otherwise why have capital punishment even for the murder of police officers and prison guards? Figures that have recently become available show a tremendous increase in homicide, both solved and unsolved, since 1967 when the general deterrent was removed. I defy anyone to say that in the past ten years, a period in which there have been no hangings, Canada has been a less violent country than it was previously in its history, even though there have been periods of great stress and turmoil such as during the great depression and two world wars. Any member who says that retention of capital punishment would promote a more violent society is just expressing bleeding-heart mishmash.

● (2050)

One just has to look at the real world, see what happens there and take note of the deterrent that capital punishment has been. I completely agree with the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. O'Sullivan) who cited the example of organized crime. He pointed out that that segment of our society is pretty well orderly and is not subject to much violence, primarily because of the deter-

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rence of capital punishment. Its members know what is waiting for them if they disobey the laws of that group.

I think we can take an example much closer to home for most of us by examining the situation of our driving laws. We all know that the existence of radar machines, breathalyzers and the points system help people to obey the driving laws of this country; people know they are there and are being used. If these machines were not there, or a person's driving privileges were not at stake, one can imagine the increase in the carnage on the highways. As far as deterrence is concerned, no one can tell me there is less deterrence in capital punishment than a radar machine, breathalyzer or demerit points system.

This legislation is no good. If I had any doubts, they would be dispelled by recalling the performance of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in administering such a law over the past five years. I urge hon. members to oppose the passage of the bill at this stage.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, 101 speeches have been made during the 12 days of this debate. It is only fair to say that everything has been said. There is little left to be said, but I rise to support the bill because I support the principle of the abolition of capital punishment. I also rise because this view does not necessarily represent the view of the majority of my constituents. Notwithstanding that fact, and regardless of how the majority of my constituents may feel on this matter, I do not think they would want me, as their representative in this House, to vote against the dictates of my conscience. My conscience dictates that I should support this bill and, indeed, I should urge the government to go one step further and bring a measure before this House that would totally abolish capital punishment in Canada.

I began my remarks by saying that everything had been said. Consequently, I will be brief. However, while I support this bill and would like to see a measure ultimately brought before this House totally abolishing capital punishment in Canada, at the same time I would like to see a tightening up of our parole laws to ensure that dangerous criminals are not turned loose on society.

Finally, may I say to hon. members who support capital punishment, those who put forward the argument that capital punishment is a deterrent, that I respect their views. I quote from the novel *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak:

If the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats—any kind of threat, whether of jail or of retribution after death—then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer in the circus with his whip, not the Prophet who sacrificed himself.

I urge the House to support this bill.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that 12 days of debate have gone by. At the beginning of the debate I did not intend to make any comments on this bill; however, as comments were made by my colleagues some very interesting points were raised. I agree with the hon. member who preceded me that everything must have been said. We have heard many statistics. What an experience it must have been for those who like statistics to compare the pros and cons and make interesting calculations. We have compared other nations such as Ireland which recently abolished capital punish-