

would seek to return to gallons while the rest of the world is going to litres. They do not represent the best in this nation. They do not represent our regard for social equality.

• (1750)

The records of those who most strongly advocate capital punishment will show that their vision is flawed compared to our vision of a country in which equality is the imperative.

I am not prepared to engage in a debate on whether the punishment should be hanging and whether we can tolerate that some people may survive hanging, with the only certitude being if their heads are ripped off. I am not prepared to consider someone being injected with a fatal fluid knowing that they are about to die in agonizing pain before witnesses. I am not prepared to argue whether the electric chair which burns the flesh is better.

I am only prepared to respond to irrefutable arguments which would support absolutely this absolute punishment. Without that, free vote or not, New Democrat or not, I will vote against capital punishment now and forever.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hudon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to the Hon. Member, whom I respect very much for the positions he takes.

What I always find disappointing in this noble Assembly is that, when we take difficult positions for or against something, people generally try to make those who hold different views from their own feel guilty, and this is happening now as abolitionists are falling in exactly the same trap as those who are in favour of the death penalty.

In my opinion, my hon. colleague made some good points, but his weakest argument was to criticize those who are opposed to his own views.

First, Mr. Speaker, there is something on which the Hon. Member might not have insisted enough. The criminals we do not want to see out on the streets are not necessarily those who have committed a first premeditated murder, because such murderers are generally kept in prison for a very long time. Those who are the most dangerous and who really destroy our society are those who have certain criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, and who are sentenced to five, six or seven years in prison and find themselves out on the streets two years later with an urgent need for money. They got used to a comfortable way of life and they are the ones who are dangerous.

However, what we are now discussing is imposing the death penalty to those who have killed. We might not be targeting the right people.

According to the figures, of 140 individuals found guilty of premeditated murder who obtained their parole between 1920 and 1975, that is over a fifty-five year period, only eight committed a second murder.

Capital Punishment

Saying that we want to kill people because they have killed is therefore besides the point. This should be our first argument.

Second, people always say that the death penalty will give the criminals a lesson. In my opinion, this is not the way to go about it. If we really want to give people a lesson, executions should be televised. As we do not want this because we are a civilized nation, then we should simply not have any executions.

[*English*]

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to forgive those who disagree with me on this issue because it is obvious that they do not know what they are doing. Beyond that, however, I believe the rest of what the Member says weighs heavily upon all of us.

There is a great deal of concern among people that the justice system does not deliver, that punishment is not sure and swift, and that some are released from prison too soon. All of that is true. If the Hon. Member wishes to pursue that matter, there is the report of the Canadian Sentencing Commission.

Unquestionably, this is the single most important concern among the people. It is a concern which causes some to see relief in capital punishment. I was engaged in a debate about capital punishment.

We gauged that about two-thirds or three-quarters of the audience favoured the restoration of capital punishment. As we argued the issue, we decided collectively that the two most significant problems were the treatment of victims and the certainty and speed of punishment. If those concerns were met, then capital punishment was not supported.

In fact, after addressing that issue, at the end of the discussion, 100 per cent of the audience and 100 per cent of those participating in the discussion, including those who initially advocated capital punishment, agreed that it should not be restored.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hamelin: As indicated by my colleague, Mr. Speaker, I was impressed not by the first part of the speech of the Hon. Member for Windsor—Walkerville but rather by his other arguments which he put forth brilliantly. He refers in particular to this image of a modern society, of an evolved society, so I should like to direct two questions to my colleague concerning his vibrant discourse on the need for an evolved and modern society. Would he be able to sell this line to the wife of the convenience store who has just been murdered? Would he be able to sell the same line to the parents of the young girl who was raped in a moment of madness, and then killed to hide the first crime? Would he be able to sell the same line that we in Canada are an enlightened society—are we not?—where our prisons are nothing short of sieves, where indeed we no longer kill anybody, right? Can you decently sell this line of Canada's enlightened society to these people? For me personally it is not a matter of exemplary nature, I know that capital