

Capital Punishment

Conservative Party are beginning to lose trust and faith in their own Prime Minister.

Mr. Lewis: Name one.

Mr. Nunziata: We know that Canadians from coast to coast have lost trust and faith in the Prime Minister of Canada. Is it any wonder that he now leads the third Party in the House of Commons?

Enough about the Prime Minister and his promises. If we wait until the Prime Minister keeps his promises, I will be completely bald and you, Mr. Speaker, will be completely gray.

The motion of the Hon. Member for Peterborough reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General be empowered to study and report on the arguments for and against capital punishment giving consideration to allowing the question of capital punishment to come to a free vote in the House.

The Hon. Member is an experienced Member of this place. He has been here for a number of years. Far be it for me to educate the Hon. Member with regard to the rules of the House. However, we do not have to empower the committee to study capital punishment. The committee can do so on its own. We do not need the House of Commons to say to members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General: "We hereby instruct each and every one of you to study capital punishment". He knows that the committee can undertake such a study on its own.

We must commend the Hon. Member for his commitment to his cause—

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): His obsession!

Mr. Nunziata: I suppose at times one could accuse the Hon. Member of being a fanatic about his cause. He is certainly irrational about his cause, as his 10-minute dissertation this afternoon illustrated.

The Hon. Member appeared before the committee. As a member of the Committee on Justice and Solicitor General I listened carefully to what the Hon. Member had to say. Yes, all members of the committee listened to the Hon. Member. The committee is presently in the process of considering whether or not to initiate a discussion, a debate or a study on the issue of capital punishment. The Hon. Member does not have patience, because the committee has yet to decide on this issue.

In his motion he states that the committee should give consideration to allowing the question of capital punishment to come to a free vote in the House. Once again I tell the Hon. Member that I am not here to educate him. But let me remind him that the Prime Minister has already made that promise. So why should the House of Commons be put in the position of having to tell the committee to keep the Prime Minister's promise? It does not make any sense at all.

We are not here this afternoon to study the pros and cons of capital punishment. The Hon. Member knows that. He knows that we are here to discuss his motion. Yet he proceeded to talk about the merits of capital punishment. This is not the time to talk about the merits of capital punishment, whether or not it is a deterrent and whether the homicide rate has increased or decreased since 1976. If the Prime Minister keeps his promise, there will be an opportunity to discuss this matter fully in a reasonable and responsible fashion so that parties on both sides of the subject matter can have an opportunity to air their views.

In my respectful submission, and in conclusion, I say that we know that there are Members of Parliament who have their own causes which they pursue. I say to the Hon. Member that he does an injustice to his own cause by using it to grandstand, to get on a soap-box to talk about capital punishment. What we need is a reasoned debate on the subject. We do not need the Hon. Member for Peterborough to stand high on his horse ranting and raving like a lunatic on the question of capital punishment.

Some Hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Nunziata: In closing, I urge Hon. Members who have some understanding of the processes of the House and who have some concern about this issue to vote the motion down, thus giving the Prime Minister the opportunity to fulfil his promise. I for one will be voting against the reinstatement of capital punishment in Canada. However, I will make my complete submissions when the opportunity presents itself in the House, presumably over the course of this Parliament.

● (1720)

In the meantime, I suggest to the Hon. Member opposite, and all the rest of the Members of his hanging committee, to be patient and to put some trust and faith in their own Prime Minister. I know that it is hard, given his propensity to stretch the truth, given his propensity not to honour each and every commandment, but a time will come for us to vote on the issue in the House.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for agreeing with me on this particular subject.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, 11 years ago this House went through one of the most divisive and emotional debates on the subject of capital punishment. What we have seen today from the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) is an attempt to place front and centre on the parliamentary agenda that question which was clearly decided 11 years ago.

I understand the frustration, the anger, and the despair of the Hon. Member in that his own colleagues, in particular the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), have not perhaps moved as quickly on this important question as the Hon. Member for Peterborough would have liked. Surely what we must ask ourselves as a House is, has there been evidence since 1976,