

*Capital Punishment*

school, molest her sexually, and then murder her horribly and viciously? When I hear someone who really should know better pleading for the life of such a murderer, I wonder what our society is coming to.

If the manner of carrying out executions stands in the way of getting a consensus on retaining capital punishment, and if there are people who are abolitionists because they feel that hanging is cruel and inhumane, then let us examine the question of the means of carrying out the death penalty. If it is the means and not the death penalty itself that deters some members from voting for capital punishment, then let us by all means find a method that is more humane, more acceptable to the abolitionists. I do not hold that hanging is the only method of execution that could or should be considered by this House when debating capital punishment. For example, in a recent opinion poll put out by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association there were thousands of replies to their questionnaire which suggested the electric chair, the gas chamber, medical drugging, and many other methods of execution, so that is not an excuse for those who do not vote on this matter because of hanging as the means of execution in this country.

My mind is open on the question of method, but it is closed on the question of capital punishment itself. I cannot vote in good conscience to save the life of a person who deliberately, calculatedly, carries out a murder, and then throws himself or herself on the mercy of the courts, and on the mercy of the society that that person scorns. They scorn our laws, they scorn our way of life, and they scorn our efforts to maintain order, peace and security for our people. Then when they are caught and convicted of committing a brutal and vicious crime, they expect more consideration and compassion than that accorded to their victims.

The sad truth of the matter is that the criminal gets far more consideration than do the victims of crime, and I cannot accept this as a natural and normal response from those in an official capacity in our political and judicial systems. Here in the House of Commons we hear all kinds of arguments in support of saving the lives of convicted murderers; we hear that long prison sentences are inhumane; and we hear that our primary responsibility to convicted felons is to rehabilitate them. I reject those arguments, Mr. Speaker. I reject them most emphatically on the basis that once an individual has lowered himself to the level of being able to commit a premeditated murder there is absolutely no way that he should be permitted to make his way back into society—a society which he rejected by committing the worst of all crimes—a society which he obviously did not respect or like—a society of which he would take advantage once given a second chance, as has been statistically proven over and over again.

There is no question that capital crimes are being committed in our society, premeditated murder, and treason against our country. Those crimes should carry the death penalty upon conviction. Where it can be demonstrated that a murder has been committed, but not planned, then a long prison sentence should be the penalty, and this penalty too should be carried out to the full extent called for in the law.

[Mr. Jelinek.]

We have been too soft on criminals as we have been in other aspects of our society, Mr. Speaker, and therefore we are beginning to pay the price. Someone said that the chickens hatched by the cabinet in its abuse of the privilege of clemency have come home to roost. I believe very strongly that that is so. The Canadian people place the blame for the present high rate of violent crime squarely at the feet of the cabinet. In their wisdom the Canadian people have placed the blame for the decline in respect for law and order on the government, and the government can no longer shift the onus on to the courts or on the parole board. But I believe there will be a sufficient number of Liberal backbenchers who will have the guts to act according to their own conviction when the vote takes place.

Hardly anyone today can accept the government's alternative of a long prison sentence in place of the death penalty for capital murder. We have watched the government turn convicted felons, dangerous offenders, loose on society after ridiculously short-terms in prison. As I said earlier, a large number of those have then committed new crimes, up to and including murder. We do not trust the government to keep dangerous offenders in prison. If the government has commuted all death penalties imposed by the courts since the present law was passed, thereby breaking the very law it itself set, and if the government persists in releasing criminals into society on day passes and week end leaves only to commit further crimes, then how can we have any faith in its new proposals?

I must conclude my remarks by saying to the government that it has provided the best possible evidence, by its own actions and by its own attitude towards violent crime in Canada, that there can be no acceptable alternative to the death penalty. The death penalty must be reinstated, and it must be applied without fail unless there are extenuating circumstances such as a recommendation for clemency by a judge or jury. The government has made the best possible case for capital punishment by refusing to honour the mandate given it by parliament, and by ignoring the rights of law-abiding Canadians to protection of life and property.

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The cracks are showing up daily in Liberal ranks over this issue, and the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice must surely know by now that their policies, or non policies, with respect to crime and criminals are not finding any more favour among Liberals than among other parties. It is time for both ministers to stand aside and make room for ministers who will obey and honour the oaths of their office when it comes to this issue of capital punishment.

It is time for action in dealing with violent crime in Canada in a direct, serious, and realistic manner, rather than by means of this phony method. This is the phony method by which the government first brought in a decoy bill. I refer, of course, to Bill C-83, the first part of the so-called peace and security package, which was meant to justify this bill and the abolition of capital punishment. However, I do not think it is working the way it was meant to work. The smokescreen set up by the two ministers responsible, for the sole purpose of reducing or even eliminating any opposition to their egotistical goals, has suddenly, to their surprise, been penetrated by members of all