

I challenge the members of the NDP. There is not one NDP member in this House.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Domm: Here comes one lone abolitionist. In 1976 11 NDP members voted for abolition. How many Liberals voted for retention in 1976? Thirty-seven. Where are they now? Have they betrayed their constituents?

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Domm: Have they flown off to their ridings? They are not in the House; where are they?

An hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Domm: What about the front bench over here? One minister is in the front row and the other one has just spoken.

An hon. Member: Oh, come off it.

Mr. Domm: I am stating facts that can go into *Hansard*. This is an issue. Whether you realize it or not, since 1953—just listen. You do not want to hear the facts.

An hon. Member: Here come the ministers.

Mr. Domm: The ministers are flocking in now. I am surprised their leader is not in front of them.

An hon. Member: You are putting on a show for the gallery.

Mr. Domm: How many ministers in 1976, Mr. Speaker, are on the record in *Hansard* as supporting retention of capital punishment when they campaigned in their ridings? They are not in the House today because they lost their seats. The whole Liberal front row voted for abolition in 1976, and we considered that a free vote! Six votes made the difference. Had three votes gone the other way on the government side or in the NDP, we would still have capital punishment today.

An hon. Member: Eighteen Tories voted for abolition, including Joe.

Mr. Domm: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), our leader, made it plain—

An hon. Member: Are you sure he is your leader?

An hon. Member: You bet he is our leader.

Mr. Domm: They do not want to face up to responsible parliamentary government.

An hon. Member: Eighteen Tories.

Mr. Clark: Is that your I.Q.?

Mr. Domm: I would remind this House that leadership involves the quality of directing by example. I would think that putting Parliament above the decisions of any one man is an example that many in this House could well profit from. Let

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me repeat, whether a society endorsing the abolition of capital punishment is a valid barometer of civilized behaviour or not is beside the point. What is to the point is whether the government and members of this House are willing to accept in practice the democratic principle of truly reflecting the wishes of the people to whom they are ultimately responsible.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Domm: Every capital punishment opinion poll taken in Canada since 1953 has demonstrated that the majority support is for capital punishment. Let us examine what the public have said since 1953 on capital punishment, keeping this point in mind. In 1953, 71 per cent of Canadians believed in the death penalty. In 1975, according to Gallup, virtually the same number of people felt the same way. Since 1966, according to four separate surveys, a growing number of Canadians—72 per cent in 1975, up from 43 per cent in 1966—feel that we do not deal harshly enough with criminals.

As to what we are doing today about it, to the question asked in April, 1978, "Would you be in favour or opposed to a vote being held on the issue of capital punishment?", 82 per cent of Canadians surveyed nationally favoured such a vote. My own constituents were polled. There were 7,000 responses to the question: "Would you support capital punishment for first-degree murder?"; 87.2 per cent responded in favour, and those responses were tabled in this House.

Another revealing figure from the StatsCan report shows that the number of murders committed during the course of another crime, which I mentioned earlier, has remarkably increased since the abolition of capital punishment. Perhaps the most crucial statistic is the murder rate as a proportion of population. In 1961, the year before the last person was hanged in Canada, the murder rate per 100,000 people was 0.94. Since then, as I have pointed out, it has increased two and a half times, and murder is increasing everywhere.

Canada's homicide rate is far worse than that of France, Germany, Japan, England, Sweden and Italy, to name but a few countries. There is far less chance of citizens being murdered in those countries where, in some cases, they have retained capital punishment, than there is here in Canada.

In conclusion, I would say that the principle of democratic representation is a much greater principle than that of any single cause—whether or not, for the best of reasons, members are convinced of the rightness of their action which is contrary to the clear opinion of their constituents. What I seek to defend is the right of the people to exert their will, which I feel should supersede the right of government—within the limits of order—to exert its will if that is contrary to the people's.

● (1620)

Finally, the principle of a free vote is far preferable to the muzzle which has been imposed upon certain sections of seats in the House when it suits the purpose of certain interests. I view the free vote practice as serving democracy, the best interests of the people and the country, and endorsing a leadership which is flexible, honest and sensitive. I urge the