

### Capital Punishment

point is TV's Archie Bunker who illustrates the difficulties many people have in making value adjustments. But if social tensions resulting from inability to cope with rapid change are so deep and complex, and if the death penalty has become a symbol upon which all of societies ills are focused, I ask you, Sir, would the execution of a relatively few murderers, including the odd innocent person, help much to resolve these tensions? I very much doubt it.

That, however, does not mean that Members of Parliament should ignore the legitimate demands for better public safety, and I do not think we will. We can begin by demanding tighter gun control legislation. We can do as I did before Christmas, call for a parliamentary investigation of the parole and day pass system. We can also begin to make certain that dangerous sexual offenders are permanently isolated from society, because apparently there is no treatment for them, and that murderers stay behind bars for a specified time. We can provide the funds necessary for a massive educational, rehabilitative enforcement attack on the drug problem, a problem which leads inevitably to degradation, debilitation, death—and, yes, sometimes even murder.

● (2040)

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that I have heard the letters from constituents read into the record in order to rationalize the positions members perhaps had already taken. Last week we listened to the speech of the leader of the Social Credit party (Mr. Caouette), who read to us from his mailbag. I would like to do the same now because I think my letter rises far above the Old Testament logic of retribution and vengeance and puts at least one individual on a more contemporary celestial plane. I will withhold the name of the writer. He wrote:

A couple of years ago when I applied for a position at Matsqui—  
Meaning Matsqui institution.

—I was asked a number of questions, of which one was, am I against capital punishment? My reply was, and has not changed, "As long as humans are used to investigate, charge, try, and finally execute a person who has committed a capital offence, a mistake could be made, and it is impossible to rectify that mistake."

Here, I think, is the most important part, Mr. Speaker:

Recently my daughter died and at present two young people are in custody in Vancouver charged with her death. If they are convicted, they could face the extreme penalty. Our whole family was hurt deeply by our daughter's passing, but can you imagine what our feelings would be if that mistake I mentioned earlier was made?

He is referring to the execution of an innocent man. He continues:

Don't get me wrong; we all want the guilty person or persons punished and punished severely. I think, and this is my own feelings, I would rather see them—persons convicted of a capital offence—put away for life with no hope of parole, passes or appeals, than if again that mistake was made the person or persons would have lost naught but time.

We might quarrel with the details of that letter, but I think it takes a very big man—and this one was suffering from a very grave loss—to rise above that and come out as an abolitionist. I think all of us who have not had to face his situation should ponder on the agony that this man

[Mr. Rose.]

and his family went through, and the idealism and the courage it took to put forward his viewpoint. His position is both surprising and encouraging. It reminds me of the abolitionist position taken by the Kennedy family after having lost two outstanding sons by assassins' bullets.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that those of us who are supporting Bill C-2 are repudiating the wishes of Canadians. There are many who seize upon the capital punishment issue as a solution to their many concerns about the wrongs of our current society. I disagree with them. Execution is no solution to anything. How much public outcry would be raised, for instance, if we hanged a dog or a horse or a man publicly, on colour television? For those who believe that hanging is a deterrent, would not a public exhibition of hanging with nationwide dissemination over the electronic media be a greater deterrent? Why hide it in private? Of course I exaggerate, Mr. Speaker, but a grisly exhibition like the one I have described would cause a public outcry against further executions far greater than any kind of retentionist sentiment that may prevail today.

Mr. Speaker, I hope with all my heart that the bill passes tonight and that Canada may continue to be among the number of civilized nations in the world which can no longer tolerate the death penalty as a cruel and unusual punishment and banish it forever from our judicial process.

**Mr. Stan Schumacher (Palliser):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the government is anxious to conclude second reading of this bill, and as a result not everyone who wishes to speak may be allowed to do so, I hope to keep my remarks to a bare minimum so that as many members as possible may participate. Later this evening there will be an alleged free vote on this question. I would have thought that those who advanced that nomenclature would also have taken the view that there should be a completely free debate, but apparently such an idea is beyond the logic of those who urged that discussion on this question cease tonight.

The main reason I am opposing this measure, Mr. Speaker, is that it would merely carry on the unsatisfactory experiment that was commenced in December, 1967. I believe it is recognized by all hon. members that, rightly or wrongly, the vast majority of Canadians wish the death penalty retained. I think my hon. friend from Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) recognized that position.

In that connection I should like to say that I for one do not think there is any great advantage in retaining the method of execution—that is, hanging—and that consideration should be given to bringing the death penalty up to date with the methods which have been developed in recent years in order to make it more humane. Nevertheless, I believe that the death penalty should be retained as the ultimate punishment for capital murder.

I have listened to argument on both sides about how a member should behave when he disagrees with his constituents. I listened to the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) on the CBC program "Cross Country Check-up" on Sunday and heard what he said about referendums. I understand the rationalization of some hon. members who are opposed to capital punishment, even though I disagree