

Capital Punishment

session, passed by Parliament and be in effect by this time. People could have been receiving their increased family allowances by July 1.

It is about time somebody told it like it is. No one has been executed since 1962. At present, no one is in the death cell awaiting execution.

I had the privilege today of speaking to a former distinguished member of this House. He said we might as well resign ourselves to the fact that there will never be another execution in Canada and we should get on with other business. I might qualify this by saying there will never be another legal execution. Every day and every night people are plotting executions, whether it is of members of this House or someone else. They are being plotted and carried out. If the executioners are unfortunate enough to be caught, they will be subject to the usual life sentence which will be commuted in 10 years. This is not a big gamble for them.

This afternoon I listened with great interest to the hon. member for Louis-Hébert (Mrs. Morin). She spoke in support of her amendment which would provide capital punishment for kidnapping and rape where killing ensues. She cited cases of kidnappings of prominent people and the children of prominent people. Time and again ransoms have been paid and murders committed.

I also listened to the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) who referred to the amendment and the remarks of the hon. member for Louis-Hébert. He questioned the hon. member about rape killings. He stated that women have a particular hang-up fear of this type of murder. He can certainly view this type of crime in a detached and compassionate way as there is no way he could possibly be the victim. That certainly would not apply to the beautiful and eloquent member for Louis-Hébert.

The hon. member for Broadview stated that most Canadians feel protected. I disagree; most Canadians feel they are not protected. I live in a small town where the crime rate is among the very lowest. Years ago we never locked a door or closed a window. Now when I am at home on weekends my wife lives in fear that someone will break in and commit a crime. I have to check all the windows and doors.

Time and again the song-singing abolitionists—and there are a great many of them—talk about terrible crimes. They point out that many of these dastardly crimes are committed by mentally ill or deranged people. They talk as though these people would be subject to the supreme penalty. That is absolutely ridiculous. Everyone knows that if someone is proven mentally incompetent, he will be sent to a hospital or institution. If he can be cured, he will return to society in due course.

We hear a lot about the words compassion and mercy. They are beautiful words, very poetic. In Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Portia said:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath.

In view of the majority, too much mercy has been handed out and there has been too little justice. There has

[Mr. Darling.]

been too much concern for the killers and little or none for the victims or their families.

It was suggested in another amendment that was not approved that we should provide a 25-year minimum mandatory sentence for first degree murder. I believe this is just as severe as the death penalty. Let me repeat, I consider death by hanging a cruel way to take a person's life. In my previous speech I stated that these cold-blooded or mad dog killers should be eliminated from society as painlessly as possible by administration of a drug.

Those in favour of abolition talk about vengeance and the state becoming a murderer. The public is unhappy with the present crime wave, too lenient sentences and murderers being allowed out for weekends and holidays—and on one occasion to get married. I am aware that the majority of members in this House are not in favour of the retention of capital punishment for murder in the first degree. However, let me say loud and clear that the majority of the people in Canada are certainly in favour of it.

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It would seem to me that members of this House should give consideration to public demand for tightening up our laws and severe punishment for these criminals. Those espousing the cause of the abolitionist have some very powerful allies in the press and news media. Let me repeat that the majority of newspapers, TV and radio stations or broadcasters seem to be in favour of abolition. However, this is one case where they have come off second best, because they have not been able to sell this bill of goods to the public at all.

It has been mentioned in this chamber before, and I repeat it, that this question should be put on a general referendum at the next general election. Let the people of Canada decide once and for all, instead of leaving it to 264 members of this House. This is supposed to be a free vote but we know that is not so. This is a government-sponsored bill, and I am quite sure there are members on the other side who deep down in their hearts feel, as many of us do, that capital punishment should be retained. If they voted on this basis they would be voting on their own convictions, and in 99 per cent of the cases would be voting as the great majority constituents would want them to vote.

The sooner we get this bill out of this House and this issue decided, the better. We can then get down to the serious business of priority matters such as unemployment, inflation, family allowances and so on.

We were supposed to amass data on whether capital punishment in respect of killers of policemen would be a deterrent to this type of crime. No data is available for the simple reason that killers of policemen in the past five years—and there have been far too many such murders—have all had their sentences commuted by the cabinet. Since we cannot ensure that the government will in fact allow the execution of murderers of policemen and prison guards, this debate is simply a time-consuming exercise. In my view our time is too valuable to waste in this way.

I would far rather the government asked for a vote on what it really wants, total abolition, and then we could get down to the business of the House. The government has