

### *Capital Punishment*

Madam Speaker, is that that is not what we have been elected to do. We do have a responsibility as individuals to vote our conscience on issues such as this.

Our responsibility as Members of Parliament can be embodied in four points, four things that we have to do. First, we have to lay out our reasons for our particular position on an issue of conscience.

We can do that in a variety of ways. I am engaged in one at the moment by speaking here in the House of Commons on this issue.

Another is one that all of us have used, and that is the sending of letters to our constituents. As well, we have our conversations over the telephone and on talk-line shows. There is any number of ways that are available to us as Members of Parliament to permit us to lay out our positions, our concerns, and where we want to go with this particular issue.

The second point is that it is very important that we as Members of Parliament do not hide from issues such as this. To hide from this issue would be the ultimate form of cowardice, in my opinion. It would demonstrate absolute irresponsibility, and certainly it would not be demonstrating leadership, which is what I think we are called upon to provide when we are elected to this House of Commons.

Flowing out of that, the third thing we have to do is to vote, and we have to vote our principles and our own beliefs.

The fourth and final point that I think we as Members of Parliament have in terms of our obligations is to be accountable for that vote. In other words, when Albert Cooper stands in this Chamber and votes as his conscience dictates, he must be prepared to accept the consequences of that vote. If my people at home are not satisfied with the way in which I vote, they have every right to reject me at the next opportunity, and I accept their right to do that.

I wish to touch briefly on my own reasons for my vote this evening. I shall be voting this evening in favour of capital punishment, and in favour of the motion before us.

I think each of us, in coming to grips with an issue such as this, set out for ourselves a set of standards, some sort of moral guidelines that we feel are essential and which we use in coming to a decision or conclusion.

For me, the standard of values that I have used is the Bible. I am not about to go into a great theological sermon—first of all because I am not qualified; and secondly, I do not think anybody would be particularly interested in what I might say. But I do want to make a couple of points that I think reflect why I have come to the conclusion that I have in supporting this motion.

First of all, I think the Old Testament is very clear. It calls for, and condones, capital punishment. I do not think there would be much dispute among Members of Parliament on that particular issue. Where the dispute would arise is when we start to look at the New Testament, because there, of course, it

is not so specific. But I believe that the New Testament is consistent with the Old; therefore, what is condoned in the Old Testament is also considered acceptable in the New Testament.

• (1640)

I have often found it intriguing that Jesus Christ who knew that one day he would be a victim of capital punishment never took it upon himself to talk about the state's right to inflict that punishment. I wanted to place those two brief arguments before the House.

Also I want to say that I reject, as part of my decision-making process, the arguments of deterrence and revenge. Even though they may well be justification for capital punishment, they are not reasons upon which one can base his or her decision to reinstate capital punishment.

I believe we need a system of justice, a system where the punishment fits the crime. I believe that we as individuals are responsible and accountable for our own actions. If we take a specific action, we must be prepared to pay the price of that activity. I also believe that the state has a right to go to war to protect its soil and its citizens and that when the state goes to war it has the right to kill if necessary to provide protection of its people. I further believe that the state has the right to take life as punishment for a crime should the state decide that it would be proper punishment.

I support capital punishment for professional killers, for multiple murderers, for those involved in sex and torture murders, for the killers of prison guards and police officers, and for terrorists. I support capital punishment where there is no doubt of the crime. If after the due process of law an individual is found guilty of the crime, I believe the state has the right to give him or her the ultimate penalty of capital punishment.

The sixth point upon which I wanted to touch very briefly is what will happen as a result of the potential return of capital punishment in Canada. I have heard the argument made by many legal friends that more juries will acquit rather than convict someone and that as a result more murderers would get off from their crimes. I would say so be it, that does not bother me particularly, because one of the beauties of our process of law is that in terms of a crime, such as one which calls for capital punishment, the individual faced with the charges has the right to a process that calls for a jury or judgment by his or her peers. It is that group which has the option, when the crime is considered horrendous enough, to require the ultimate punishment.

I see that my time has almost expired. In conclusion let me say that the last few weeks have been very difficult for a number of my colleagues. I mention this because it is important for the Canadian public to understand. It is difficult for my colleagues and friends who do not support the majority opinion of their constituents. It has been difficult because they