

Capital Punishment

criminal justice system in Canada. I want some realistic people administering that new system.

I say to all Members of the House that if we do not take the bull by the horns and use this common sense approach, we will be back in the House in the near future debating the same topic all over again. It will be a never ending debate that will arise every time there is a murdered policeman or rape and murder.

In the meantime, a life sentence must mean a life sentence and must include no privileges for those people during those 25 years; they must do hard work during that time. The system must be tightened up to show that Parliament has the will and desire to put respect back into the criminal justice system in this country.

Mrs. Claudy Mailly (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, it is with a very heavy heart today that I stand to speak in this debate. The thought that this dreadful motion would pass and that this barbaric practice would be reinstated was so appalling to me that today, for the first time, I voted against my Government in following a procedure in the House. The reason I did so was that I did not want to do even the smallest thing to help this motion pass.

If the motion does pass, I will mourn for my sweet country. I will mourn for my young son because he will have been robbed of one of the very basic reasons why he can be proud to be a Canadian. This country has recognized that killing even by the state is unacceptable.

I ran for office because of our constitutional situation. I feared that I would hand over to my son a country divided by civil war.

He was three years old in 1970, during the October crisis in Quebec. I feared so much that this division on our constitutional question would tear my country apart and leave my child growing up in a torn country that I became involved in politics.

It was a very difficult decision. I did not like what I had seen happening in public life and did not want to be part of it. But I was so concerned that this very important question of our unity would be used for political gains, by a party that wanted to maintain itself in power by using division to do so, that I ran for office. It was a difficult election and I did not win the first time I ran. However, I won in 1984.

It was such a joy for me when Quebec finally accepted to come back into the Canadian family. However, what will all this be worth if I am faced with having to hand over to my son a country that will have been diminished again?

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, in a comment I made to one of my colleagues who advocates the death penalty I drew a parallel between the abolition of slavery and the reinstatement of capital punishment. My colleague responded gently but with

deep conviction that I was mixing two elements which did not have anything in common.

And yet, Madam Speaker, both have a lot in common. In April 1966, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker stated in this House:

Canadians conceal their pride in their country. We do not boast about it. How many of us proudly point out that it was here in Canada that slavery was abolished for the first time in all the western world in 1803? It is an amazing record. It was 40 years before it was abolished in the United Kingdom and many more years before it was abolished in the United States. The argument that slavery was divinely appointed was still used in the days of Webster, Choate, and the other giants of the 1830's and 1840's.

The Right Hon. John Diefenbaker therefore considered that our having been pioneers with respect to the abolition of slavery was one of the glorious pages of our history.

In support of the parallel I make with the death penalty I should like to put on the record the opinion of Secretary Jean-Claude Bernheim responsible for prison matters at the International Federation for the Rights of Man and coordinator of the board of inmates' rights. He says, and I quote:

In future, how will Canada be able to pride itself on being the defender of rights and freedoms before international authorities, particularly the United Nations Human Rights Commission, if it demonstrates so clearly that it could not care less about its commitments and its signature? Its credibility might easily be questioned, and its action against apartheid, among other things, will lose all its value.

Then there is an article entitled "Maintain the abolition of capital punishment. Canada must keep its credibility with respect to rights and freedoms."

He went on to say:

South Africa is already making the most of our racism concerning native people. What will Canada do after executing one of them—indeed, members of minority groups and the poor are most likely to be executed—and in turn South Africa hangs a black? Will it be in a position to voice its indignation?

Not only will the restoration of capital punishment make us lose credibility with respect to rights and freedoms, but it may also signal the reinstatement of the death penalty in other countries. As a society, can we assume such a responsibility?

As the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker told us in 1966, there is a very obvious link between the abolition of slavery, a black mark against our civilization, and the death penalty.

I would also like to quote journalist Gwynne Dyer who wrote this in the *Whig Standard* of April 18, 1987:

● (1330)

[English]

Ten years ago, virtually the only countries that were still killing criminals were South Africa, most of the Communist countries and a few other nations in the Third World. But now the United States is executing people again too, and Canada will shortly decide whether it will follow suit. Yet the death penalty probably makes not the slightest difference to the murder rate.

[Translation]

Indeed, our colleague from Charlevoix said so a moment ago. He favours restoring the death penalty, but he emphasized that capital punishment does not deter criminals from killing other human beings.