

always exists. But we have a great number of checks and balances in our judicial system. In almost every province of this country today there is free legal aid. We have a competent and capable bar and we have competent and capable judges. We have a very well organized jury system, and there is a system of appeal. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in my experience a miscarriage of justice that would result in the death of an innocent person is not a possibility.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) quoted the Bible last night. I suggest to him that the instruction "Thou shalt not kill", one of our ten commandments, does not mean that we shall not kill in the absolute; it means we shall not kill without just cause. To kill in protecting your nation in time of war is justifiable. To kill in protecting your family is justifiable. But I suggest that those who, in a premeditated and heinous fashion, murder members of society are not justified. I suggest that the commandment to love one's neighbour certainly does not mean that when one's neighbour is murdered, your neighbour's killer, who may well kill again, should go free.

There have been many improvements in medical science over past years and in the science of altering a person's personality, a science that is developing bit by bit. I hope in years to come that society will be able to change the attitude of people toward life. But we have not yet demonstrated anywhere in our penal system, in our psychiatric studies, in medical or sociological work that we can change the personality of hardened, dangerous criminals. Until we can demonstrate some degree of success in changing the personality of those who are the kind who commit the heinous type of premeditated murder of which I have spoken this afternoon, we owe society the ultimate protection of capital punishment.

I am a member of the United Church of Canada, and my church clearly calls for the abolition of capital punishment. I have suggested to my church, and I suggest to this House, that at this stage of our social development the abolition of capital punishment is not possible. When our society develops, perhaps when it becomes more loving, more capable of organization and able to alter people's personalities, able to effect some cure of those who are engaged in forms of anti-social behaviour, then perhaps the abolition of capital punishment will be possible. But at the present time this is not the case.

Our prison system is brutalizing. The investigations that followed the Kingston riots clearly demonstrated that some of the persons incarcerated in the institution bore only a likeness to human beings and were really animals. The death penalty as a punishment is a lever of protection and discipline, a lever which at this stage in the growth of our society cannot be dispensed with. Members of this House should examine closely what police associations across the land have said. Police officials deal more with the criminal element of society on a daily basis than anyone else. Right across Canada these associations have said—indeed, the wives of police officers have collected petitions to this effect—that we cannot abolish the death penalty.

We still retain the provision that the Governor General in Council has the right to direct that a person convicted

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of murder can have his sentence commuted, and that is as it should be. Executive clemency must be maintained.

This is a bad bill, Mr. Speaker. This bill lists police officers, ancillary sheriff's officers and prison guards as exceptions, and thus discriminates against other categories of persons who might be murdered. My daughter will not be protected. A member of the House of Commons will not be protected. You can kill the Prime Minister but under this bill his killer will not hang. It is a bad bill and I will vote against it.

I think it is imperative for the government to rethink this bill and produce another one. It must analyse the crime of taking a person's life and set new standards. The government must present to the House a bill that the vast majority of members are happy with. The very length of this debate clearly indicates a division in the country, and clearly indicates that this House is not satisfied with this bill.

● (1640)

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, the last time I rose to speak in the debate on capital punishment was some five years ago. Just before I came into the House at that time I was handed a very urgent and important letter from a constituent, a school teacher of my sons. She urged me to support hanging as the only way of protecting children. She was very sincere and very concerned about what she thought was happening. This was probably as cutting a letter as a person could receive, especially when he knew he was going to vote for abolition. I have a very high regard for that teacher, as I have for other people who do not necessarily agree with me on this question of abolition. I intend to continue to be an abolitionist and to support this bill with its deficiencies. I think there are some deficiencies in this bill and my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) has pointed them out. In principle, we will support the bill in the absence of a measure proposing total abolition.

As much as anyone else, I am aware of what polls indicate are the attitudes of the people of Canada. I have conducted polls in my own riding and have read the results of national polls. After reading them, one would think this was a hanging country, that the public very much wanted to bring back hanging and is determined to do so. If that is the impression left by the results of polls I suggest it is somewhat erroneous. I am sure if you asked the fast and facile question, do you want hanging, do you want to bring back capital punishment, that is the kind of answer you would get when you live in a society where, for one reason or another, the fears of people have been increased by prison escapes and their security is a matter of importance. I sympathize with and understand that attitude.

Like other Members of Parliament, I should like very much to feel I was in harmony with my constituents and could go along with what they appear to want. However, I do have a responsibility, and I am sure my constituents will recognize that I have a responsibility to act and vote in the best way possible on the basis of the information before me. I have a conscience as has every other member of this House of Commons. Sometimes a debate gets off on the wrong track when we assume that because everyone