

vengeance should not be the principal thrust of a modern judicial system. I also agree with this concept, as do the vast majority of MPs and the public.

The fourth argument which is raised is that if capital punishment is reinstated it will become more difficult to convict murderers. I personally consider this a strong argument in favour of the reinstatement of capital punishment. The implicit assumption underlying it is that somehow jurors are convicting people of murder now notwithstanding that they have genuine doubt as to guilt. With capital punishment in place, jurors would be more reluctant to convict in the absence of resolving all doubt.

I personally feel that juries should not be handing down guilty verdicts in circumstances where they have some doubt as to guilt. If the availability of capital punishment will cause jurors to take the extra time for consideration before bringing in a guilty verdict, I would consider that to be an argument in favour of the reinstatement of capital punishment.

The question then which is relevant to the capital punishment debate is this. Does one favour taking a human life under any circumstances and, if so, on what basis? If so, the matter of which crimes should be potentially subject to capital punishment and who should impose the sentence, as well as the method of execution to be used, must also be considered.

When I first entered politics nine years ago I decided it would be prudent to ask myself, in the privacy of my own home, what my beliefs and convictions were, so that when I appeared in a public forum or gave interviews to the press, I would not be left to wing it; that rather, I would have a comprehensive philosophical and political basis on which to respond.

I must admit that until I sat down and wrote a list of the questions that I could be asked, I had not given the issue of capital punishment much time or thought. What thought I had given it led me to believe that capital punishment should not be imposed in the majority of first degree murder cases, since most first degree murders were committed by close family members, and murderers falling into this category show a remarkable degree of rehabilitation. Nor did I believe that an accomplice who was waiting in the get-away vehicle should be equally liable for the death penalty as the person who went into a bank and shot a teller.

However, as I considered that decision, my mind turned to individuals such as those who killed the Portuguese shoe-shine boy, Emanuel Jaques. After holding the boy for several days and assaulting him, they then drowned him.

I also began to think of cases involving young children, particularly girls, who were murdered following violent rape or sexual molestation, as well as, of course, serial killers, of whom there are all too many, who principally abduct, assault and kill young women.

In these situations, it seems to me that there is a valid case for capital punishment. The rationale, of course, is primarily

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one of public safety, although there is a substantial element of deterrence. For example, questions asked of the killers of Emanuel Jaques elicited the response that had there been capital punishment, they would not likely have proceeded to kill the boy. Similarly, there are examples of lifers, particularly those guilty of multiple murders, who have nothing to lose in trying to escape and as a consequence inflict serious or deadly assaults upon prison guards.

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In these situations of serial murders and murders which involve rape or child assault, in the case of murders involving any violent crime, or in the case of murders done for ideological reasons, particularly the so-called executions of innocent hostages, I found, in closely examining myself, that I believed the public safety was best served by reinstating capital punishment. Having reached this conclusion, the questions were these. What sort of system should be brought into being, how would this differ from the old system, and how could a structure best be set up to achieve the desired results?

Over the last nine years I have had many discussions with constituents and participated in well over 100 all-candidate debates in which the issue of capital punishment has often arisen. By and large I found that most of the population had not thought out the issue thoroughly. They tended initially to engage in a knee-jerk reaction to the issue. However, after prolonged discussions, I found that the vast majority of Canadians seem to have similar views to my own.

With this in mind, I ran a referendum in my riding early this year. In my referendum I did not simply ask a black and white question such as, "Are you in favour of capital punishment?" I took steps to explain the issues to my constituents and to use open-ended questions to seek their views.

I indicated that I would treat the referendum seriously, that I genuinely desired to know the views of my constituents, and that I would reflect their thinking in my speech in the House of Commons.

The response was overwhelming. Over 16,300 ballots were returned; by far the largest response ever received by any Member of Parliament on any issue up to that time. About 10 per cent of these ballots either included lengthy comments in the section provided on the ballot or contained letters. The ballot of course was conducted completely anonymously, but many individuals took the opportunity to sign their names to the letters.

I was interested to find out that my constituents' views closely coincided with my own. First, there was no support whatsoever for an automatic death sentence for any crime. However, the vast majority of my constituents believe that capital punishment can be justified under one or more circumstances.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents felt that capital punishment should potentially be available to any person who