

Capital Punishment

maintaining the integrity of our police forces. There is one area in my constituency where women and children are afraid to go out after nightfall. One individual has been charged with assault on three different occasions. Each time he obtained a suspended sentence. He has so little respect for the police now that he deliberately flaunts them and makes the whole business of law enforcement very difficult.

Surely our courts should give a little more support to the police, especially if the evidence is foolproof. Letting a man off once on a suspended sentence is fine. In many instances, that is all that is required. However, when the same man repeats the same offence a couple more times, surely the man should be removed from the community for a time. It also behooves me to say that a little more regard should be given to the appointment of judges. This should be done on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of political affiliation. Under these circumstances, perhaps it might be possible to have a little more uniformity in the application of our laws.

Someone in this House stated today that we have a permissive society. This is so because of permissive parents and permissive institutions. We live in an age of violence. I wish to give an example of what happened several months ago in a hockey game between Portage la Prairie and Humboldt. It was a junior hockey league series for the Centennial Cup. Humboldt withdrew because of excessive violence. One Humboldt player was severely maimed at Portage la Prairie. He may never be able to play again. While on the ice, the players were slashed and speared. It seems that the players on the opposing team were trying to perform deliberate mayhem. The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association reprimanded the coach and players of the Humboldt team for withdrawing from that series.

Here we have a form of legalized violence in a national sport. I feel that for this sport and many others, laws should be made to protect people whether they are on or off the skating rink. Any hockey player causing violence deliberately should be criminally prosecuted. This is a difficult decision for many Members of Parliament. Many have conducted polls in their constituencies. I have never conducted a poll, but I have received many letters on the subject. Fortunately, my choice will be much easier than that of many members. Approximately 60 per cent of the correspondence I received is from people basically in favour of Bill C-2. The only point they have made, and this is in keeping with what was said by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik), is that life imprisonment should be just that. After deliberately committing murder, a person should not be eligible for parole after six or seven years. The people who wrote to me feel that life imprisonment should be at least 20, 25 or 30 years. They also feel that more care should be taken by the parole board before letting a murderer out on parole. These people have expressed some reservations about granting leave to a supposed murderer a few months after being convicted and put in prison.

Many Canadians are frightened because justice is not always administered as it should be. I agree with having a humane prison system as well as granting leaves to certain types of murderers. I also believe in training for those who

have committed offences against society. However, we have an important duty to preserve the safety of the communities of this country.

Mr. John Reynolds (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): Mr. Speaker, many previous participants in this debate have remarked that at this stage most members have already made up their minds and it is hardly likely that their attitudes will be changed in the course of the debate, even by the most eloquent speeches. I am sure this is probably true, but I hope many hon. members will be listening to the speeches because perhaps some of them can be swayed.

I, personally, during my election campaign told the people in my constituency that I would support the abolition of capital punishment. During the period after the election and before this House opened, I took it upon myself to do a lot of research into this subject because I knew it would be coming up. I read many books, I interviewed inmates from our federal penitentiaries and, after this procedure, I have changed my mind.

I will speak on some of the reasons why I have changed my mind in a moment, Mr. Speaker, but I would not be doing my duty as a member of this House if I did not mention my concern over the government presenting this bill to this House as a priority item when we still have over 500,000 people unemployed and many old age pensioners and other people on fixed incomes having a hard time with the cost of living rising from month to month. I cannot understand this government bringing in this bill. Why do I say this? Since the Trudeau government was first elected in 1968, capital punishment has been abolished. As a matter of fact, there has not been one single person hanged since this government came into power, so what is the big rush to get in this bill? I say the government is wasting time, stalling. They should be dealing with positive programs to stop high unemployment and high inflation. Where is their contingency plan for price and income controls?

I should like now to get back to some of my reasons for changing from an abolitionist to a retentionist. We must realize that when we are talking about the criminal element in our federal penitentiaries in this country, we are only talking about 1/30 of 1 per cent of all the people in Canada. It seems strange to me that this House has to spend so much time on the death penalty and bail reform debates when we are only dealing with 1/30 of 1 per cent of all the people in Canada. I think it is time we got a little tougher with these people who cannot conform in society and did a better job of looking after the 99 29/30 per cent of the people who are not in our penitentiaries.

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When we talk about capital punishment, we are not talking about hanging everyone who commits murder. We are talking about the hard-core criminal who premeditates and decides he is going to kill somebody. This is the man we are talking about. We are not talking about the man who commits murder in a fit of passion, the man who is insane. We are talking about the hard-core criminal who cheats the public, breaks the laws to make his living, who doesn't want to change and who looks upon murder as part of his business. I say that these murderers who murder for a living should be eliminated from society. Like most