

Capital Punishment

● (2150)

Let me respond to the second question. I find it totally offensive and quite surprising, coming from that Member, that he would try to mix two such serious issues. One is a question of war and the other is a question of the comportment and decency of people during the course of war. One is a question of how society behaves when it has found itself in an uncivilized situation.

We are supposed to be addressing a civilized and mature Canada, a fine land that is allied with the western countries, not with nations of obscene character like the Nazis.

I am not only concerned about the six million who were killed to which the Hon. Member referred me, I am concerned about the 20 million, whether they were the gypsies, fighters for freedom, the French, Yugoslavs or any of the people who were murdered at that time in Russia, Ukraine and every part of that area. That was wartime and the Hon. Member should not mix those two issues. I find it totally offensive.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear the Hon. Member indicate that this is a silly debate.

Mrs. Finestone: I did not say silly.

Mr. Hawkes: I think if the Hon. Member carefully checks the record, she will find the word there. Perhaps she may not have intended to say silly, but when she looks at today's *Hansard* she will find the word there. It is not a silly debate, but a very important one.

It is important to recognize that it is the Opposition Parties that have determined that House time normally devoted to subjects like unemployment and other concerns shall be used for this debate. There has been plenty of opportunity to reach agreement in the House on such things as shorter speeches, longer hours and other ways of dealing with this debate outside of the normal flow.

I hope Hon. Members opposite reflect on the Hon. Member's comment and consider whether or not it is important to move outside of regular hours to allow more Members to be heard and whether restriction on the length of speeches might be in order due to the importance of the debate. However, I believe we share a common goal that we would like to reduce violence in the world, particularly murder. Essentially, we are saying that we would like to reduce killing in society.

It is my strongly held view that killing is reduced primarily because people have faith in their system and their laws. It seems to me that the retention of the right of the state to take a human life is an important building block in the development of the faith in the system. I believe that when we, as elected representatives, tell our citizens that we will not do what they believe is important, we are really promoting a certain lack of faith in the legal system. In the final analysis, we are really inviting killing in spite of the protections and processes which the law has to offer.

Perhaps I feel more strongly about that today because of the nature of a trial in Calgary where a druggist has been charged with murder for shooting a robber. He shot a robber because he lost faith in the system, bought a shotgun and decided that he had the responsibility of protecting his home and his family.

Has the Hon. Member considered that if the state does not retain the right to take a human life, it invites others to take some of those same lives and perhaps the lives of innocent people as a result of a lack of faith and trust in the judicial system? Are we likely to achieve our common goal if we, as Members of Parliament, go against the view of the general population and reduce their confidence in the law? Are we more likely to reduce the crime of killing when people are more comfortable with the law and what it achieves?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I wish I knew shorthand so that I would have been able to better answer the Hon. Member's question with the sincerity and concern it deserves. I know his questions were posed in good faith. If I used the word silly, it was inaccurate and I did not intend to use it in the context of this debate.

First, I do not intend to discuss the case in Calgary because it is presently before the courts. I am sure the Hon. Member would not expect me to do so. At a time when we are not addressing the issue of violence in a society that is becoming more violent, would it be wise to enable people to carry more guns? I suggest it would be a very unhealthy response to the situation that he presents.

Second, faith in the system is exactly what I was discussing. If there has been a diminution of the application of the intent of the law, which I alluded to in my speech, then we must redress the way the judicial system operates. This could include educational systems for our judges, a fairer system that does not consider whether or not one is rich or poor in our society, a sentencing system that is more even, or more effective and judicious decision-making by the parole boards. There could be a number of reasons for a loss of faith in our system.

Why was the Government not more straightforward and take its responsibility to present a Bill? The Government should not proceed by proposing this motion which was called for by its members but with which its Leader does not agree. It should have introduced a Bill on the death penalty on which there should have been proper debate and consultation throughout the country. Hearings throughout the country could have been based on constructive approaches. This motion is designed so that a number of Members can travel on a ghoulish mission to determine how people will be killed. The Government has not fulfilled its commitment and has been absolutely hypocritical.

This debate is a political ploy. The leader did not agree with the premise of the proposal and left it to the committee to decide. My Party and I disagree with this procedure and I do