

from the mind and I am sure it can be said of this debate, as it was said of the capital punishment debate of 1966, that it is parliament at its best.

I should like to divide the remarks I wish to make and put them under two general headings. That in itself is unique for me. My speeches usually have three headings and a few amendments as well. But today I have just two general headings. First I would like to indicate, even though it is a case of repeating some things that have been said, why I stand with those who favour total abolition of capital punishment. After I have done that I should like to take a look at the present bill in what I think is its proper perspective.

With respect to the question of capital punishment itself it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the Solicitor General was perfectly right the other day when he pointed out that it is the last survival of the idea that punishment has to fit the crime. As he pointed out, we do not burn down the house of an arsonist. Neither do we maim or disfigure a person who may have maimed or disfigured a victim. If I may go on, we do not steal the property of a person who has committed a theft. We do not practice punishment or vengeance in this way except in the case of murder. Here we still seem to carry on the idea that there is something valid about the concept of a life for a life. To me, Mr. Speaker, it is completely uncivilized. It is a barbaric practice which is not worthy of a twentieth century society.

I know that there are those who say they are concerned about the victims of crime and that we should not be concerned in a soft-hearted way about the criminals who commit crime. But I would like to say, as I have said before, that what bothers me most about capital punishment is what it does to society itself. When a hanging takes place—and I am grateful that there has not been one in Canada for almost five years—it is not just the hangman who is performing it. It is not just the law in some detached way which is going through its processes. We, the people of Canada, are there. We, the citizens of this country, acting through the state of which we are a part, are committing the act of destroying a life. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is not the mark of a civilized society, that it is not the answer to the seriousness of the crime of murder.

It is interesting, although a bit staggering, to read the sections of the Criminal Code that deal with capital punishment. If there are members of the house who have not read

them recently I would suggest that they do so. As a matter of fact I read them a day or two ago to a visitor to my office and after I had finished reading them my visitor asked me, "When were those sections written"? The savagery and the barbarity with which the details are spelled out as to how society takes the life of a criminal, arranges for his body to be buried within the prison walls and so on, sounded to him like something out of the middle ages. I urge that we face up to the fact, if we ask that capital punishment be part of the law of this land, that we are asking for a barbaric practice which does not go with modern society.

I feel also that the retention of capital punishment on society's part is an admission of failure, a counsel of despair. We live in an age when we are conscious of the wonderful things we can do. Any day now we are likely to pick up the newspaper or turn on the radio and learn that we have put a man on the moon. Before long there may be many men and women on the moon. We have built computers which can do the work of hundreds, even thousands of people. We have made tremendous advances in medical science and we have even made some advances in the social sciences. We are in an age which has seen an explosion of knowledge. As after-dinner speakers sometimes remark, there are more scientists alive today than existed in all the previous ages of man's history. Indeed, more knowledge is accumulated in a generation today than was accumulated in centuries before.

● (5:50 p.m.)

It strikes me that it is a terrible commentary for us to boast of living in a wonderful age among intelligent people and yet not have any better answer to the problem of crime, particularly the problem of the supreme crime of murder, than just that we put the person out of the way. I submit that to follow that counsel of despair is an admission of failure which society ought not to be making. I know the argument is advanced—it has been advanced by the last speaker and others who have taken the side of capital punishment—that we must consider the matter of the protection of human life, indeed, that we must consider the sanctity of human life. I go along with that phrase 100 per cent, or 1,000 per cent if you like; but I submit that life imprisonment or imprisonment until there is no danger of the crime being repeated is just as much a protection for the individual as is capital punishment. I suggest, on the other hand, that so long as the state