

Capital Punishment

not want to live in a society which says that revenge is a rightful motive for the state.

I would like to quote a very distinguished member of my constituency, the Reverend Bernard Pinet from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who has worked for many years with prison reform in our community. He said:

The real issue in the death penalty debate is the question of values upon which we want to build our society. If killing is wrong, then the state should not adopt the very immoral act it is repudiating.

Since the state would be killing on my behalf, an execution would make me an accomplice in a premeditated and deliberate murder.

I do not want the state to kill in my name. I do not want to teach children that violence is an acceptable solution to human conflict.

I do not want to live in a society that responds to evil with evil, to violence with violence. Human life is sacred. No one's life is expendable.

I could spend the rest of the afternoon reading from those views, which I believe clearly demonstrate why public opinion polls should not be a matter that is taken into account in this debate as we each answer to our own conscience. We must determine what is really the proper stand to take.

• (1310)

Let me conclude by recalling the play *Elmer Gantry*.

I remember Elmer Gantry, the great evangelist, preaching hell, fire and damnation and someone standing aside saying: "That man is so busy preaching what is right he forgets what is good". I hope Members of the House will not forget what is good, which is to vote against this motion.

Mrs. Mailly: Mr. Speaker, the Member said that the response in two-thirds of his mail is against capital punishment. The situation in my riding is the opposite, yet I have been against capital punishment from the beginning, when 88 per cent of the Canadian population seemed to be for capital punishment. The numbers are declining, perhaps because people are beginning to think twice about what it means. I am pleased that the Hon. Member pointed out the difference between representing a riding and simply following the wishes of people in the riding who perhaps may have drawn a conclusion as a result of lack of information or by reacting emotionally.

However, I disagree with the Hon. Member who seemed to put all members of the Government in the same category, when he said that we are trying to limit debate. I would prefer that rather than put it in such a partisan political manner, he should remember that there are a significant number of Members on this side of the House who are against capital punishment but who also realize that in this parliamentary system when business goes through slowly there are certain Standing Orders available for the Government to use. I agree with the Hon. Member that we do not want them abused, but we should not be too hasty in saying they are being abused at the moment.

I want to refer to *Hansard* of April 4, 1966, to a speech by the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker who was quoting John Donne, the great English poet. He said:

[*Translation*]

Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind.

[*English*]

He went on to quote John Bright, who was a parliamentarian from a previous century who said:

[*Translation*]

A deep respect for human life has much more value to prevent a murder than a thousand executions. It in fact can provide the greatest security to human life. Capital punishment, while feigning to show respect, tends in fact to suppress it.

[*English*]

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Gatineau (Mrs. Maily) both for her comments and her questions. I pay tribute to her stand, particularly in light of the representations that are being made.

I believe she represents exactly the kind of Member of Parliament I was describing, who comes to a decision and uses this debate as an opportunity to broaden the understanding of this very crucial issue among constituents. I compliment her not just because of her stand but in the way she approaches it.

The reason I was somewhat harsh in my statement about the motion of closure is that it was put forward by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), and we learn from experience that the Deputy Prime Minister takes such action on the part of the Government. I certainly recognize that there are many members of the Conservative Party who have spoken.

Let me say that I was very moved several weeks ago after listening to the speech by my Manitoba colleague, the Hon. Member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta), who dramatically stated that after reviewing the evidence he changed his mind.

My remarks were certainly not meant to be partisan in that sense. I was attempting to say that members of the Conservative Party in the government caucus have their own ability to influence the Deputy Prime Minister and others in the executive who will be making decisions about time allocation. They have an opportunity to use that influence to persuade the Government into ensuring that this Parliament does not hastily make a judgment before the right moment arrives when this Parliament, in its manner of debate, is ready to make that decision. I trust the good judgment of the Hon. Member for Gatineau and I know she will be able to use her own persuasive talents in that respect. I apologize if it seemed that I was explicitly referring to those Members. I was suggesting that it was the Deputy Prime Minister who made that motion and I was making a general appeal in that respect.

In response to her last comment, I wish that in some ways we had the eloquence of a John Diefenbaker these days to make the case. There was probably no finer parliamentarian and I know of his incredible commitment to this issue. He was,