

We hear many statistics regarding homicides, murder rates, and infanticide rates. I say to all Canadians that statistics are general numbers. In many cases they are developed to uphold specific arguments on issues and are normally developed to the advantage of the side presenting the argument. I believe that the only statistic that is valid is the one that the homicide rate has doubled from 1962 to 1983. Certainly, populations have increased, but this is no reason to accept an increase in the rate of crime and violence as an integral part of our society. We are an advanced society and are supposed to be making progress and improving in this area.

However, I must point out to the House that if one looks at major U.S. cities there is a very thin line where cities lose their level of safety, and where the people can safely walk the streets after dark. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to be as stringent as we prudently can be, as populations increase, because the ability to supervise and police effectively decreases in direct proportion to population increases.

There are many reasons for this situation, but the main one is that law enforcement agencies and their agents have reduced personal contact and, therefore, cannot maintain the same level of control over the criminal element.

I could read into the record a multitude of statistics, but the real issue here is law and order with a well administered justice system that does not categorize or place special emphasis on the life of a police officer or prison guard, but recognizes that all lives have the same level of importance and value. If we look at the heinous serial murders and mass murders, we will see that these deliberate and vicious acts are mostly against young children, women and the poor in our society. These are the people whom we seek to protect.

In recent debates we, as a Government, have been chastised for the timing of this issue. Statements have been made that we are using it for political expedience. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) stated in 1984 that a free vote would take place on the issue of capital punishment. Here we are dealing with this issue, as promised. It was a promise made and another promise kept.

● (1330)

I would like to make reference to the motion put forward by the Government, and speak to the role of the special committee that will be struck should the initial vote in this House carry in favour of the reinstatement of capital punishment.

Some of the abolitionists have tried to portray all of us who favour the return of capital punishment as terrorists, vengeful, vindictive, sadistic, medieval types who would burn at the stake or boil in oil all persons for virtually any crime against people. Well, sir, here again they paint a false picture because I am a retentionist and I believe, as most Canadians, that we would sooner let hundreds or thousands go free than make one error in charging, prosecuting and penalizing an individual falsely.

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I also feel that we must be very selective in determining which offences warrant capital punishment. The committee, I hope, will recommend check systems in the process which will make it impossible for us to commit an error in this very crucial and final process.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to once again emphasize that we are dealing here with a vote of conscience. During the opening day's debate, however, I could not help noticing that many people fail to recognize that this is the only route to take. When dealing with issues such as this, it is important that they not be dealt with on the basis of who is on the right and who is on the left. Rather we must deal with what is right and what is wrong.

As legislators I believe we have a responsibility to protect members of our society. In light of this, I must vote for the reinstatement of capital punishment. None the less, this is a very emotional issue. I understand that other people in this House have different opinions. It is my hope that this debate will allow Members of the House to present their views in a civil manner without bringing disgrace to this institution. It is important that all sides of this issue be presented to the Canadian people fairly, openly and honestly. I believe that when all the facts have been presented, it will be obvious that the reinstatement of capital punishment is necessary for the maintenance of law, order and safety within our Canadian society. I thank all Hon. Members for listening so attentively to my presentation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I see an Hon. Member rising. Is it the wish of the House to proceed to the period for questions and comments immediately?

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to proceed to questions and comments after Question Period if this could be possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being 1.33 p.m., I do now leave the Chair until 2 p.m. this day.

At 1.33 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[Translation]

TRIBUTE TO CLAUDE JUTRA

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, last week, news of the death of our great film maker, Claude Jutra, saddened all those who were familiar with his work.

Born in 1930, Claude Jutra belonged to a new generation of Canadian film makers which conquered the hearts and minds