

*Capital Punishment*

the Criminal Code. In my opinion, that is not saying that abortion on demand is the policy of our Party.

**Mr. Elliott Hardey (Kent):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against the amendment before the House and in support of the original motion. The issue of the restoration of capital punishment in Canada has caused us all to search deep into our hearts and feelings. We must then try to reach a decision based on honesty and common sense.

I know that I have spent countless hours studying and researching this subject, and more hours in discussing it with my wife and family and close friends. As a Member of Parliament, I have received hundreds of letters and had many discussions with constituents. I have attended and participated in many forums in my riding, as I am sure have all Members in the House.

I have listened to arguments in the House and I recognize that there is an honest argument both for and against the motion. I listened with extreme and intense interest.

Some of my colleagues insist that where there is life there is, in fact, hope and that reform should always be considered a possibility even in the case of first degree murder.

I also recognize that this issue is one of conscience. I will respect those Members who present arguments against the restoration of capital punishment, knowing full well that the majority of their constituents probably do not agree with them. I want to defend my colleagues who debate this issue in an honest fashion, based on conscience, regardless of which side of the issue on which they stand.

I ask the people of Canada to realize that while it is the duty and the honour of a Member of Parliament to represent the people, indeed to be servants of the people, on matters of conscience we cannot dismiss the fact that a Member is more than a delegate. When a motion or Bill is declared to be one on which there is a free vote, a Member is expected to vote according to his or her feelings after discussing the issue properly.

I am sure there is no exception that at election time all of us were asked at every candidate's meeting and in every interview our position on capital punishment. None of us should feel uncomfortable when we vote on the motion in this debate, as long as Members are being honest with themselves and with their constituents.

What bothers me the most and what has disappointed me in this debate recently is some of the cheap political shots that creep into the debate, especially from one side of the House. This is not a political issue. No one should be ranting about politics as some of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party have done.

On the first day of the debate, the Member from Regina made an argument about conscience with which I fully agreed. However, the Member went on, as did the Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) and nearly every Member from the

socialist Party, to rant about how the barbaric Tories want Canada to go back to hanging children for stealing a loaf of bread and that the Tories dreamed up this motion for political reasons.

● (1630)

I am disappointed in that approach. We should be dealing in truth and paying attention to the fact that in 1984 every candidate, regardless of political connection, was asked by the people to bring a free vote to this House of Commons on the capital punishment issue. We should not speak about irrelevancies which create confusion in order to gain political points. We should have a free vote and not to play "Follow the Leader" or a partisan game.

The Hon. Member from Regina presented a conscience approach. By attempting to move this free motion into the political arena, even though the other two Parties are absolutely free on the issue, is a detriment to the cause he claims to promote. How can anyone take a Member of Parliament seriously when he or she debates a free motion in a partisan manner?

The motion simply asks if we believe that capital punishment can be justified under any circumstances. In my view, I justify capital punishment as a symbolic act. In the case of the most heinous crimes, society should be prepared to effect retribution by taking the life of the perpetrator. The death penalty would be a warning like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. I do not feel we should allow misguided compassion to erase our concern for the hundreds of unfortunate victims of bestial crimes.

There are those who fear that the state might execute the wrong person someday and to some extent that could possibly happen. However, as far as I have been able to research the subject, although we have put innocent people in prison, we have not as yet mistakenly executed someone accused of the type of murder about which we are speaking today. We are not talking about murders of passion. We are not talking about an emotionally deranged person convicted of murder. In this debate Members continually lump all homicides into statistics instead of dealing with what we are really concerned with, and that is capital punishment for first degree premeditated murders. We are concerned with killers of policemen, prison guards or serial killers. In our Canadian history we have recorded the cases of dozens of murderers who have been released or paroled after being convicted and sentenced of first-degree murder. Surely we do not have the right to expose the innocent to this type of danger. Some Members have indicated that we can fix that problem by changing our parole system. I agree that that possibility should be examined.

This motion would trigger a change in the system, and I will come back to that point later in my remarks. First, I want to talk a little about the deterrent factor. There are many ways to discuss deterrence when considering capital punishment. We have already heard many times in previous hours of debate