

Question No. 2: For the murder of anyone while carrying out a premeditated crime? Reply of the public: Yes, 55,374; no, 8,516. Question No. 3: Should the capital punishment issue be decided by a Canadian referendum? Reply of the public: Yes, 55,282; no, 3,444. Question No. 4: Are you against the death penalty because of the means of execution (hanging)? Reply of the public: Yes, 9,954; no, 44,258.

This is significant. The word "hanging" is not at issue, but the whole basis of the question is truly analyzed. People truly went to the bottom of things.

Question No. 5: If yes to question No. 4, what means of execution would you favour? Reply of the public: Electric chair: 2,822. Gas chamber: 2,486. Drugs: 2,911. Firing squad: 856. Any public means: 693. The means used by the murderer: 37.

I will come back to this question later.

Question No. 6: If you are against the death penalty by any method whatsoever, what penalty would you favour? Reply of the public: Psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation: 168. No parole: 11,712. Parole: 194.

The number of respondents represents 87 per cent of the total population. It is therefore with good reason that members of Parliament oppose the passage of Bill C-84. They argue that the majority of the population favour retention of the death penalty. The population is absolutely right if we consider this consultation made by the Toronto Police Association.

● (1150)

Mr. Speaker, we have also received many letters from the public. I shall certainly not read even one of them because they all express approximately the same opinion. But I still insist that this is a very serious situation. We are all Christians. We all need some light and I believe that it would not be improper for the House to ask the Holy Ghost to enlighten us so that we may receive the enlightenment that we need before the vote and be truly able to take an action that will be in accordance with the wishes of the people. A proverb says *Vox populi, vox Dei*, which means that the voice of the people is the voice of God. As Christians, we must therefore have the humility to ask the enlightenment that we need to do what the people wish for the greater good of Canada.

I would like that between now and tomorrow, when we have the opportunity to ponder some more over the seriousness of the choice we have to make, we can so express ourselves that people will rest assured that all members voted conscientiously. That is the important thing to do if we are to restore credibility in the minds of Canadians about the role of members of parliament.

It is current practice for bills introduced in the House, after being dealt with at the second reading stage, to be sent to a committee. Bill C-84 was sent to the justice and legal affairs committee but, unfortunately, I believe the purpose of that committee was distorted because I have always believed that the referral of a bill to a committee of the House aims at giving the public a chance to be heard, to present briefs, to express verbally their approval or disapproval of the bill.

Unfortunately I deplore the fact that the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs proceeded so fast that it was not possible to call witnesses for or against capital punishment so that we might have had the widest consultation possible and be in a position to present amendments that would have made this bill better understood by the public.

Capital Punishment

Canadians could have hoped for the future of our country to have the best possible law and the closest to their expectations.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we depreciated the actual value of committees as the public has been deprived of that benefit. I know that the committee sat but it did so rapidly that it was impossible for the citizens concerned to come to Ottawa and make representations that would have surely been well received by every member of the committee as it is their role to entertain representations from the public.

I am sorry but I think that that kind of procedure is an attempt against democracy and, in the future, I am afraid that the public will not have too much confidence in those committees and that they will neglect to express their point of view in other circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, no need to say that my position has not changed because I am more convinced than ever that we should give to those responsible for the protection of the individual, the protection of our property and the public. I regret that the majority did not agree to offer that protection to which the public is entitled. I am afraid that henceforth the people will not have enough confidence in the protection we can give them and will take the law into their own hands. This would lead to a society of disorder, a society of violence. However, as I said last week, God knows we are well on the path of the society of violence that we accept as a normal evolution. We talk about evolution but what is it? We can have forward evolution but we can also have retrograde evolution. So the word evolution does not mean in our society that we are wiser than our fathers and our great-grandfathers. Fair enough, there must be evolution but if we really want that it be in the right direction, we should take measures to avoid the situations of violence, we should suppress all the causes that lead us to violence. Whether these causes are political, social or economic, as parliamentarians we have the duty to open our eyes, to be well aware of the glaring facts and to take the necessary measures so that there can be more justice in our country and so that we can prevent that idea from springing up in the minds of those who suffer from persecution before justice, I mean that of wanting to take the law into their own hands. Moreover, we should repress those criminals who have the regrettable tendency to attack their fellow-beings, even though they are deterred by the courageous attitude of society and by the parliaments which adopt laws to protect them against themselves.

I think that was our ancestors' aim: to provide that punishment for the criminals in the Criminal Code. We must protect society against those who have this tendency, against those who are prepared to go to any end to seize the property of others by violence, at the point of a gun.

Mr. Speaker, I think we could have found a form of execution for criminals without talking about hanging. I still hope it will be possible to find a humane way of applying death sentences, likely to make those who will be aware of it understand that society is sorry for having to execute the guilty, to deprive him of the great gift of life, but doing so in a human way, society will understand that such action is prompted by a sense of duty, a spirit of justice and at the same time a respect for the great value of human life.