

simply say that I am in complete agreement with the hon. member for Lotbinière when he says that our society suffers from feelings of insecurity with regard to the murders so often committed in Canada and particularly in the province of Quebec. The hon. Registrar General (Mr. Turner) could certainly confirm that not a week passes without the newspapers in Montreal or the province of Quebec reporting one or two murders, and sometimes more, committed in the Montreal area.

According to the weekend newspapers, a building watchman was killed in Montreal because he had not paid his share.

The same thing happened in Rimouski over the weekend. Murder is increasing considerably in the province of Quebec and has been in fact since the death penalty has been abolished in Canada.

The police in the province of Quebec and in some parts of Canada, society, the police forces are not fighting at the present time against two or three murderers but against syndicates of murderers, hired gunmen who kill people disliked by other people. Now, Mr. Speaker, I must say that police machinery is powerless to destroy such syndicates, those networks of criminals breeding not only in the province of Quebec but throughout Canada.

The question we ask, on becoming aware of such increases in crime, is the following: Is it the proper time for the government and parliament to broaden out the legislation which I think is necessary to punish adequately people who take the lives of others?

It is often claimed that statistics prove little, but to support my statement that the number of crimes has considerably increased in Quebec, I must say that I received, last year, from the province of Quebec, certain statistics on the fearful rate of increase in the number of murders in Quebec. I quoted them last year, but to support my statement this year, I shall read to you the table I have received for the years 1946 to 1967, showing the horrifying and enormously convincing fact which will inspire us to think twice before proceeding with the abolition of capital punishment.

Mr. Choquette: Are those Mr. Wagner's figures?

● (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): Those are the figures given by the Attorney General of the province, and also, the results of investigations we made. I think that you made some also, Nevertheless, we should refresh the

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memory of the members of the house, who will be called upon to vote on such an important matter; we should think twice before voting freely on that bill.

There were 36 murders in Quebec in 1946, 32 in 1947, 32 in 1948, 29 in 1949, 34 in 1950, that is an average of 32 murders a year during five years. There were 40 in 1951, 42 in 1952, 43 in 1953, 32 in 1954, 36 in 1955, that is an average of 38 murders a year for those five years, and an increase of 13 per cent compared with the five previous years. There were 40 murders in 1956, 37 in 1957, 39 in 1958, 44 in 1959 and 47 in 1960, an average of 41 murders for those five years, and an increase of 12 per cent compared to the five previous years.

We now come to the year when death sentences have been systematically commuted. In 1960, there were 47 murders; in 1961, 57; in 1962, a little less, that is, 45, but in 1963, there were 63; in 1960, there were 47; in 1964, 54 and in 1965, 65, throughout the province, or a yearly average of 57 murders over five years, and an increase of 28 per cent as compared to the five previous years.

Mr. Speaker, those are figures which in my opinion, should give cause for reflection to those who have not studied this question in depth.

When the time comes to vote for the abolition or the retention of the death penalty, I feel that the members of this house should have a sole object in view. We are here, Mr. Speaker, to enforce the laws enacted by parliament, to watch over the established social order and to pass legislation intended for the majority of the people.

If, sometimes, we pass ad hoc legislation, it is because there is a need for it. The bill under consideration is a piece of ad hoc legislation, since the majority of people will not feel safe, as was said so eloquently this afternoon by the hon. member for Lotbinière, if we abolish the death penalty in all cases except for the murder of prison guards.

I ask you this question, Mr. Speaker: Is my life, your life, the life of other members of this house not as precious as that of any prison guard or police officer? We know, of course, that when those people chose the job of a prison guard, they accepted the risk inherent thereto: We must protect the people's life. When bandits hold up a bank, they are usually armed. They can shoot, on the slightest provocation and kill all the people on the premises. They are fully armed, they have already premeditated their crime, their