

miners, construction workers, et cetera. Therefore, I do not think that is a fair statistic.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to my colleague, the Member for Northumberland—Miramichi (Mr. Jardine). I would like to preface my remarks by saying that I very much appreciated the thoughtful and reasoned arguments which he put forward. With respect, I come to a different conclusion.

I would like to question my colleague on one of the points which he used to buttress his argument in favour of the abolitionist position, that being his reference to certain other countries which we should either imitate or emulate. Amnesty International has put out information which indicates that there are presently 28 countries in the world that do not provide the death penalty for any crime whatsoever. There are another 18 countries in which the death penalty has been abolished for ordinary crimes, but has been retained for certain circumstances such as war time and military law. There are another 129 countries, including Belgium, the United States, China and Japan in which the death penalty is available for ordinary crimes.

My hon. friend and the preceding speaker made reference to certain other supposedly civilized countries in the western world that have done away with the death penalty, and said that Canada should do so as well. I must say that I am somewhat confused by this. I note that among the 28 countries whose laws do not provide the death penalty for any crime whatsoever are Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua. In putting this position forward is the Hon. Member suggesting that Canada's system of justice should lean more towards that of Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic or, having regard to that which has taken place over the centuries, in countries such as the United States, China and Japan?

I would very much appreciate it if the Hon. Member would explain to me why we in Canada should feel obliged to emulate those few countries with less than 10 per cent of the population in the world which do not choose to have capital punishment.

• (1410)

Mr. Jardine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind remarks. I know that he includes Belgium as one of the countries that has capital punishment on the books. While I may have the year incorrect, I believe the last time an execution actually took place in Belgium was either in 1954 or 1945.

The Hon. Member who spoke previously pointed out that capital punishment in the United States is a state responsibility and, unfortunately, the southern states tend to carry out capital punishment on those in a minority.

There are some 129 countries that still have capital punishment on the books, but I would have to ask my hon. friend how many of those countries have democratically elected governments? How many of those countries are civilized, as we

recognize civility? How many of those countries would we actually want to emulate and compare with our society? I suggest that there are very few.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this ill-timed government motion in favour of bringing back the death penalty, I want to say I oppose it for the same basic reasons that other Hon. Members who have spoken on this side of the debate have opposed it.

First, capital punishment does not serve as an effective deterrent against murder. It tends to be administered selectively so that a disproportionate number of poor people or members of visible minorities are executed. Third, there is always the possibility of executing someone unjustly convicted of murder. Fourth, there is a documented tendency for juries to acquit a much higher percentage of accused murderers when the death penalty is present. Thus, society has less protection when the death penalty is in place than when it is abolished and juries convict a higher percentage of accused murderers. Taken together, I believe these four reasons provide a solid, pragmatic foundation for voting against the death penalty.

However, I think our opposition to the death penalty has to move beyond pragmatism, to ask what kind of society we want and how we can help to build it. In the debate so far there has been a great deal of reference to scripture. I want to begin with some reflections on a very interesting passage of scripture, the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm, which begins as an expression of homesick longing by a Jew who is in exile in Babylon:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

The Psalm goes on to consider how his own people had been destroyed and devastated and how his city had been destroyed. It reads:

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

The Psalm goes on:

Oh daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall he be who requites you with what you have done to us!

What follows is perhaps the most terrible verse in all of scripture:

Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!

We have heard a fair amount of talk about the Judaeo-Christian ethic, but I am sure that these verses coming from the scriptures of both Jews and Christians shock the sensibilities of every one of us. They testify to the anguish, the despair, the deadening of mercy that wanton violence can bring about in the life of a person who is otherwise sensitive and caring.

This kind of violence and therefore this kind of vengeance is far removed from the daily experience of most people in Canada. Perhaps it might make more immediate sense in Lebanon, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, Central America or Northern Ireland. We cannot imagine the kind of inner anguish that would lead an otherwise sensitive person to say,