

*Capital Punishment*

terms of the duty of the state, than that of preserving human life. My goodness, I really should not have to say that in this Chamber where we vote billions of dollars each year to enhance, protect or secure human life through various health and welfare programs and a whole variety of laws and regulations.

If we really believe that central to our responsibility as legislators is the enhancement and protection of human life, I know no justification for saying that somehow or other some people can be used as a kind of means to an end. I have heard the rationale many times that it is an acceptable principle—I have heard it advanced many times in this debate—that from time to time certain individuals should be executed as an example, as a deterrent against the future kind of crimes we want to avoid. What this says to me is that some people, a few people, not very many people, perhaps only two or three, or five or ten, can be used as a means to a greater good. I find this not only misleading but dangerous.

**An hon. Member:** Hitler said that.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Thank you. I am grateful for that comment because it is exactly what I am trying to say. I do not want to use that kind of scare tactic here but there is not that long a connection.

When you make the argument that certain people in a society are expendable, for whatever reason, then it is not too long a trip to say that perhaps a number of people are expendable. We live in a time when we are being told continually there are all kinds of goals we should be achieving.

We live in a time in which sometimes when we analyse our economic and social situations we tend to look at people as one of the factors in an over-all system, as one of the factors in production, for example, as one of the commodities to be manipulated or induced to take a particular action from the standpoint, say, of monopolies or of large-scale industry. There is a terrible danger and pressure, right now, in our time because of the corporate strength of institutions to manipulate and abuse and mislead people for some purpose, whether it is for the maximization of profits, or large corporate growth, or national prestige. If we succumb to any one of these pressures we will, of course, be providing for ourselves the most inhuman kind of society possible.

I do not apologize for the time spent in the House debating the issue of capital punishment because to me it is a cornerstone for the appreciation of human beings, men and women both individually and collectively, and if even to some small degree we can say there are certain basic principles on which the state operates, that we have a certain basic view of man that says he cannot be a means to an end, that man is always an end in himself, then we cannot even for the sake of justice think of manipulating and abusing and occasionally executing people, we will have made some small advance in the nature of our society.

What I am saying to members on both sides of the House today and to the general public is that I believe that it is terribly vital for the future sense of responsibility, security, and most of all for human dignity that we should not allow to exist in our country, and presumably as an example to other countries, not continue even in a kind of *de*

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

*jure* sense, the option of the state for capital punishment. It is clear to me that we must once and for all reject the notion that people, no matter who those people may be, can be expendable. We as a state are committed in the most basic way possible to the enhancement and preservation of human life.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member who has just resumed his seat, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) who, in the name of the right to live, the dignity of life, suggests that nobody, especially members of parliament, should legislate to maintain death penalty. Bill C-84 has given rise to many comments throughout Canada. In some areas of the country, some people advocate the abolition of the death penalty or the passage of Bill C-84, while in others, in my opinion, the controversy is somewhat general and represents about the same percentage across the country.

When the hon. member for Egmont says that, from a Christian point of view, we cannot interfere with a human life, I ask him then why we have jails in Canada. Why send anyone to jail? Is life imprisonment so much better than the method advocated to get rid of criminals and murderers, not necessarily in a spirit of revenge but out of respect for law and order? This is still important. When we see a red light on a street corner, it does not mean to go ahead but to stop. Someone may go ahead just the same, but at his own risk. If a car drives through the green light in the other direction, the person that voluntarily crossed the road on the red light may be killed. The red light does not say: You are going to be killed. It says: Stop. I think that capital punishment is the red light that says: You have no right to kill. If someone kills just the same, let him suffer the consequences of his action.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that capital punishment is a controversial issue throughout Canada and public opinion is almost equally divided. We are discussing Bill C-84 and the freedom of the members to vote for or against it. However, we feel that some instructions are given in spite of the free vote. For instance, Liberals who are retentionist are advised to stay home when the vote is taken in the House. The same thing might happen on the Progressive Conservative side, because in the present situation, people are well posted after reading press reports. The Progressive Conservatives are divided. Some are retentionists, others are abolitionists. On the Liberal side, it is the same thing: Some are abolitionists like the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). They want Bill C-84 to become the law of the land. As far as the New Democrats are concerned, they are for the complete abolition of capital punishment.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the pressures exerted by various organizations, not only policemen but public organizations throughout Canada, the Solicitor General sticks to his guns. He is an out-and-out abolitionist even at the cost of his seat if the government should fail to support him. Mr. Speaker, as I already suggested in this House several times, why not hold a referendum on Bill C-84 concerning the abolition of capital punishment?

I am sure the right hon. Prime Minister and the Solicitor General are opposed to a referendum because they are