

Capital Punishment

anger and the unease over our prison, penitentiary, parole and prison leave systems I believe is an apt demonstration of that feeling. It cannot be ignored or separated from this debate. In my view, this debate should have taken place concurrently with debate on remedial measures in respect of these and other penal issues.

● (2020)

I believe there are many people who think we have gone too far, too fast; that we have not been able to digest many of the social and economic reforms in our society; that our body politic probably has severe indigestion. This debate is one of those manifestations of the fact, as is the feeling of many people in the country. In recent years we have witnessed in many western countries phenomena such as the tremendous acceleration toward urbanization, with all its concomitant defects and problems. Associated with it and partly related to it is the rise of permissiveness, militancy, violence, changes in life style, increased use of drugs, and the thrust of organized crime. These are many of the phenomena. What will come out of this environment we do not know.

People who came to this continent did so to satisfy a desire for self-expression, for incentive and individual enterprise. Big government and big business have made great strides to blunt these characteristics and substitute for them organized welfare and an industrialized and highly centralized society, and in doing so they have disturbed and blunted the drive and the ability to cope of individuals who built this land into what it is.

So having in a way given up our right to deal with problems on our own, we have allowed the giant unions and the large corporations and, above all, big, benevolent governments to order our affairs to an almost unlimited extent. It has been a sort of trade-off of our independence. We have been told by our masters that this is in exchange for a better life, more order and stability. But we have obtained neither. In fact, we have probably lost out on both counts. So, made hostile by these phenomena, yearning for an orderly and stable society, people demand scapegoats. It is an expression of human nature.

To some extent a request for the restoration of capital punishment has a measure of symbolism about it, with which I sympathize though I cannot accept it to the point of voting for it. I was glad to read in the speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that he seems, at long last, to have recognized this fact on behalf of the government. I hope this bill passes. But whether it does or does not, this other major issue will continue. It must be settled. It will not wait, because time does not wait. It will not wait because there is a corrosion and a sickness in our society which has to be diagnosed at once and remedied. It will not wait because if it is not dealt with and eased, the existing malady which is temporary may well become permanent and terminal.

While I cannot, and will not under any circumstances, believe that hanging a criminal will make a better world. But for a better world to be brought about there must be the acceptance that certain action will be taken to make it better; there must be some assurance of a reasonable amount of tranquillity in our society.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, in the last few months this House has heard literally dozens of speeches on the subject contained in Bill C-2. The subject of the supreme penalty has been covered from every conceivable point of view, sometimes covered haltingly but more frequently, I think, with passionate conviction and eloquence. It is doubtful to me, however, whether any minds have been changed as a result of this prolonged debate because capital punishment, like abortion, poses for many a deep moral dilemma.

I wish to speak tonight, not because I feel I can bring anything vitally new or convincing to the floor but principally because I feel also very deeply about the subject and I am prepared to stand or fall for my convictions or, if you prefer—my prejudices. I do not like to be at odds with what I take to be the wishes of my constituents. What I find even more demeaning, however, is to be at odds with myself. If I voted in any other way than to support this bill before us, I am afraid that I would forever regard myself as being grossly, in fact obscenely, disloyal to a very personal matter of conscience which has inhabited my mind for many years.

The issue of capital punishment has been proclaimed many times as a moral decision or a matter of conscience, and I agree with this position. For those members who believe that the shadow of the gallows represents a deterrent sufficient to inhibit the prospective transgressions against society of a life taker, there is no alternative but to vote against this bill. However, for those who believe, just as firmly and just as sincerely, that since murder is more frequently an impulse, a crime of passion usually directed against friends and family, the deterrent effect of capital punishment is enormously suspect.

This group, the latter group of members—and, I hope, the majority of members in the House tonight—have no alternative but to vote in favour of the bill before us even though it represents but *de facto* abolition. To these members the vengeful, premeditated taking of human life by the state is a violation of civilized behaviour far too abhorrent to be accepted with equanimity. Both of these pro- and anti-capital punishment positions are at least consistent with the concept of a vote of conscience and are therefore rational positions to hold.

The members who are really troubled, it seems to me, are the ones who are going to vote against their philosophical and moral principles chiefly because they believe that a vote contrary to their conscience is at once democratic and pleasing to their constituents. I reject this idea, this notion completely, because I reject the concept that a Member of Parliament is little more than his constituents' delegate, that is, that he should always reflect accurately, as far as he can gauge in his decisions and in his votes, what he regards as the temporal opinion of the majority of the people he is privileged to represent.

If our democratic process no longer depends on electoral confidence in the judgment of an individual Member of Parliament, we should burn down this House, as Guy Fawkes once tried to do with the mother of parliaments, and install a multiplicity of computers to sample public opinion continuously, day by day. Members of Parliament at worst become redundant if we take this view, that is, if we embrace the delegate concept, and at best, little more