

*Capital Punishment*

The bill has a great deal of merit and should have been passed. It was deliberately talked out by Liberal members—the hon. member for Renfrew North-Nipissing East (Mr. Hopkins) and the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. Young)—much to the disgust of the rest of the House, including many private members on the government benches.

Canada badly needs a universal emergency number. The use of it would no doubt aid in our efforts against capital crime and lawlessness of all kinds. The Liberals talked the same bill out on March 26 last, at which time it was sponsored by one of their own members, the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson). This is the new Trudeau liberalism in action at its best, or perhaps I should say at its worst.

We have an opportunity and responsibility in this debate to stop shilly-shallying over the question of capital punishment and do what we should have done many years ago. We should carry the war to the enemy. People who engage in deliberate anti-social conduct, who commit deliberate pre-meditated murders and other forms of violent conduct, are the enemies of our society. They are engaged in war, Mr. Speaker, and we in this House are engaged in a holding action. An analysis of the statistics available to all of us could indicate but one thing; we are losing the war.

The Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) has declared more than once recently that if anyone hangs in this country he will resign. Now, Mr. Speaker, as an elected servant of the public, and a special one at that, placed in an office of trust, elevated to the cabinet, he should resign for making such irresponsible statements. We are fighting a war against capital crime, and how ridiculous can the Solicitor General make himself when he lowers the prestige and dignity of his office by making such statements? He can be compared to a war minister, a minister of defence, who would declare that he will refuse to fight a war that the country might be engaged in but he still wants his job. Again I say, let him resign.

Many of the hon. members of this House, some of whom are my colleagues, continue to speak out on behalf of the poor, misunderstood and maligned criminals. While I respect their right to hold and express their own views on this or any other subject, I cannot accept the argument that we, the state, do not have a moral right to employ capital punishment as an extreme measure in dealing with violent and capital crime.

Murder is the extreme method in settling an argument, in pulling off a major crime such as a robbery, or to settle any other matter in which a criminal might become engaged. In fact nothing could be more extreme. I simply cannot understand how anyone could become overly sympathetic over a murderer who happens to be unlucky enough to get caught.

● (1640)

I was appalled the other night to hear a tape of a conversation a reporter had with a prisoner in a Montreal jail who had been involved in a hostage-taking incident. When the reporter asked the prisoner whether he would have killed the hostages, the man laughed and said he would not have hesitated. Asked how he could have done such a thing when he had never committed a murder

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

before, the prisoner laughed again and said he did not say he had never killed anyone, just that he had never been caught.

Arguments that capital punishment demeans a society, or that capital punishment is as barbarous as the crime for which it was originally proposed, are specious and unwarranted. People who argue that the state does not have a legal or moral right to impose capital punishment are using a personal and restricted definition of justice. It is all too easy to “cop out” and say that murder is murder, whether committed by a criminal or by the state. Mr. Speaker, I would accept the proposition that a state can commit murder. A totalitarian state can, but not one such as Canada. But I will not accept the contention that a state can commit murder in the context offered so frequently in these debates as a valid reason for abolishing capital punishment.

When a person is tried in a duly constituted court bound by laws of procedure and evidence, as is the case in Canada, and found guilty by his or her peers, whatever verdict is rendered by that court should determine what the disposition should be. When a verdict calling for execution is rendered by a judge and jury, unqualified by a recommendation for mercy, the state is bound to see that the execution is carried out. This would not be murder. It would be the administration of true justice in consequence of a deliberate murder having been committed—I use the word “deliberate” because we have always made a distinction between deliberate murder and other actions leading to a person's death.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) went to the Canadian public last Sunday night by way of the television program “The Nation's Business” to present his fatuous argument that capital punishment would not be a deterrent to the crime of premeditated murder, and to try to sell his proposal regarding gun controls. He told his audience that those who have presented counter proposals do not understand the legislation.

I am amazed that the minister would go on national television and try to convince the Canadian people that the spokesmen for the national gun clubs and associations cannot read, that they cannot interpret legislation. They know full well what the intent is of this legislation, just as they know the intent of the legislation which would abolish the death penalty. I am surprised the minister did not use a couple of minutes of his television time to explain what the gun control law is intended to accomplish. Instead he spent the entire program period complaining that people just do not understand him or his legislation. Mr. Speaker, we understand him all too well. He has fallen for the old story that if you take guns away from the law-abiding you will eliminate murder and other crimes committed with guns, with the result that capital punishment to deter people from committing deliberate murder would not be necessary.

The minister also asserted there was no evidence to support the view that capital punishment was a deterrent to murder. How could there be any evidence of that kind when the hon. gentleman and his cabinet colleagues have commuted every single sentence imposed on convicted murderers of policemen and prison guards over the past ten years? In these circumstances, how could there be any