

Capital Punishment

get off much sooner than that. Even if we change the system, there will always be bleeding hearts telling us that these people should be released. For that reason and for that reason only, I believe that the state must act. Tonight, at one o'clock, the vote will take place. If you consider all the arguments which have been brought forward for and against, you cannot argue but that they are balanced. However, the will of the people should prevail. Statistics from across Canada show that 60 to 70 per cent of Canadians are in favour of the re-establishment of capital punishment. Mr. Speaker, we will vote at one o'clock.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor in such an important debate, particularly after the speaker and my friend who has just explained his position in favour of restoring the death penalty.

I had drafted a few notes, but instead I will use the arguments he made to justify the reasons why we ought to reinstate capital punishment to demonstrate that these arguments should be used instead to prove that the death penalty is not the solution to the problems he raised.

I will not refer to statistical data which might indicate that the number of murders in Canada may have gone up or down because of the death penalty. I will not refer to statistics which show that the crime rate is higher in those American states where capital punishment is the law of the land than in the others where it has been abolished.

My hon. friend has just explained why most people, when responding to a questionnaire or a survey, are in favour of restoring capital punishment.

First he cited concrete examples of convicted murderers who have been released a few years after being so convicted. Apparently this is why so many Canadians are frustrated. The only alternative when confronted by the lack of initiative is altogether natural and normal. People react and say to themselves: Since our prison system is inefficient, since our courts are inefficient, and since there are no other solutions available, let us go for the ultimate option, hanging. Let us hang convicted murderers.

But when we get around to talking to our fellow citizens, in my riding or anywhere else in Canada, and we ask them: Do you really want the treatment an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, they say no. Would it be that you seek revenge at all costs because someone has killed? Do you want to kill him too?

When debating capital punishment, we ought to keep in mind the thousands of Canadian workers who died, for instance, as a result of accidents on construction sites because the boss wanted to make money so he took a chance and did without safety scaffoldings to protect workers, so there were accidents and workers died. Are we going to hang this man who risked the lives of workers to make a few extra bucks? We

see this happen in mines and in many industries. If we decide that we want an eye for an eye, we shall also have to kill employers who voluntarily decide to risk the life of their workers, whatever means of execution we choose. We would then go back to the law of the jungle, and I am convinced that my hon. friend who has just spoken and all Canadians would be against such a system.

What Canadians cannot accept, and I agree with them, is the inefficiency of our parole system. What the hon. Member clearly showed was that the father of a murdered child was not disappointed to know that the criminal who had killed his child was not dead himself, but disappointed and discouraged to see that the murderer had been set free before being convicted, and this is what the population cannot accept.

If we say that the problem is caused by our penal system and by the easy access to parole, then we should talk about that problem and take action to correct it. I find the present situation unacceptable and I can understand that the public would react spontaneously by requesting reinstatement of the death penalty. However, I cannot understand such an attitude on the part of a parliamentarian who should represent the population. Why are most retentionists in favour of reinstating the death penalty? Some say that, since our penal system is not working, we should capitulate and kill the criminals. Others say that it costs a lot of money to run our prisons. Such views are dangerous. Elected parliamentarians who judge such issues as the life of an individual on the basis of cost, if they are still here in the year 2000, might find that it costs a lot of money to keep our increasingly large ageing population in senior citizens' homes. Faced with dramatically high costs, instead of looking for new solutions, these people will capitulate as they are now doing in the case of the death penalty as they have no ideas about how to reduce the crime rate and the costs of running our prisons, and they will say: We need euthanasia to get rid of the sickest and the oldest because we have to reduce costs. This is a danger in a society if we, especially as parliamentarians, accept for monetary reasons, the idea that we can take away the life of someone else. This is very serious.

● (2120)

And the other people were saying: In my riding, most are for this. I remember that no so long ago, most people were against deindexing old age security pensions and there were not many Conservative Members who would stand up and say: Canadians are against this, Canadians are against that. People were following the leader. And now, all of a sudden, in an effort to attract attention, to justify for some reason, not to displease the Prime Minister, they come up with this argument which I feel is worthless. Because from now on, all of those who are using this argument will have to carry out surveys in their own ridings, whatever the subject matter of the debates may be. If their constituents tell them to go to the left, they will go to the left; if they tell them to go to the right, they will go to the right. This is sheer nonsense. If Canadians elected these people, especially those in the Opposition—those opposite were