

Capital Punishment

Mr. Crosby: The purpose of this exercise is to make sure that, as members of Parliament, knowing what our constituents feel about this subject, we do something to ensure that they have the opportunity to express those views. How can anybody argue against that?

An hon. Member: Nobody is.

Mr. Crosby: Mr. Speaker, punishment in our system should have three elements: retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation. When I talk about capital punishment, I am talking about people beyond rehabilitation who, by any test, cannot be allowed to exist and go free in society. I am not talking about a 16-year-old boy who commits murder in almost accidental circumstances. I am not talking about a person whose mind is so diseased or disordered that he or she cannot be expected to account for their actions. I am talking about terrorists, the worst kind of murderers, and the planned and deliberate murders that I have seen in my own career. I defended ten men during my career because it was my duty to do so, and I performed my duty. But right now I have a different duty. My duty is to represent the people of Halifax West, to listen to the people there and the people across Nova Scotia and Canada, and to present their views in this chamber. That is exactly what I am doing and that is what all the members here are doing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosby: To come into this chamber and impute motives to us of the kind and character suggested in this House today is despicable, in my opinion, and I will not tolerate it. I am certainly not in any way, shape or form in fear of the public or anyone else because of my view of how I should represent my community. But I do reject, and I hope all members on this and the government side reject, the idea and philosophy—this holier than thou attitude—that certain members know certain things which allow them to dictate a certain course of action. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, they do not know. They cannot solve the problems in El Salvador, and right now it appears they cannot even solve a crucial problem in Canada because they will not allow it to come forward for discussion. They will not allow the democratic right of the people to be exercised through this chamber. They want to spin it off and deal with it on some higher basis. Well, I do not know what higher basis there is in political life in Canada than the people of Canada. Their views and our ability to represent those views in this chamber.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, any murder anywhere in Canada is a horrible act and should be condemned, and communities where these horrible murders take place have every right to be outraged and upset when a murder takes place in their midst. But it is completely false and misleading and, I maintain, phony, to suggest that any community or individual will be protected from murder by the reintroduction of capital punishment. The evidence is overwhelming, not only in Canada but

around the world, that capital punishment does not protect communities or individuals from murder. It does not protect policemen; it does not protect children; it does not protect old people; it does not protect prison guards. Generally the lowest murder rates exist in states without capital punishment. As a matter of fact, the highest rate exists in countries with capital punishment. In western Europe, the highest murder rate exists in France where they officially have capital punishment and have applied the guillotine several times in the last few years.

● (2100)

Mr. Lambert: No, that is not true.

Mr. Allmand: It is true.

Mr. Lambert: They have applied it twice.

Mr. Allmand: It has been used four times. In Canada, since the abolition of capital punishment in 1976, there has been a continual decline of the murder rate. Because some hon. members opposite have disputed that, I want to put the figures on the record once more. In 1975, there were 701 murders in Canada; in 1976, the year of abolition, there were 668; in the year 1977, there were 710, which was a slight increase; in 1978, there were 658; in 1979, there were 631; in 1980, there were 593.

In the city of Montreal, which had a reputation for horrible and serious murders several years ago, in 1975, the year before abolition, there were 112 murders. In 1976, there were 83; in 1977, there were 100; in 1978, there were 70; in 1979, there were 68, in 1980, there were 45. The most recent statistics are for the end of March this year when there were 24 murders. If that trend continued for the rest of the year, there would be approximately 60 murders, which is a considerable decline from the 112 in 1975.

Some people believe that capital punishment should only apply for the murder of policemen. The highest number of policemen ever killed in Canada was 11 in 1962 when capital punishment was in force. At that time, two people were hanged in this country for killing policemen. Since that time, the number has always been lower. I must say that any number of policemen who are killed is too high, but to suggest that capital punishment will protect policemen is false, misleading and phony. There is no relationship between murder rates and capital punishment.

The only real reason behind the wish to bring back capital punishment is vengeance. Unfortunately, vengeance is not a sound basis upon which to build a criminal justice system. Some people say to me that if someone in my family were murdered, then I would change my mind. There is no doubt that if a person were murdered in anyone's family, the family would be considerably upset and the first reaction would be against the killer. However, this is no basis upon which to build a criminal justice system.

In the Kennedy family in the United States, two sons were murdered. We did not hear Mrs. Kennedy or the rest of the family clamouring for the return of capital punishment. When