

Mr. Speaker, now that we are engaged once again in serious debate on the subject of capital punishment, it is time for all the experts to reappear. There are more experts on this subject than on any other subject I can think of, with the possible exception of the Canadian economy. They are a dime a dozen, and come to think of it, that is just about what they are worth. For some strange reason, most, if not all, of these experts are abolitionists. These are the people who insist that we demean our own society when we take the life of a brutal and sadistic murderer. These are the people who maintain that capital punishment is not, and would not be, a deterrent to deliberate murder. They have all kinds of data and statistics to support their arguments. When their statistics are put to the test, we find that their supporting arguments are based on the very same data as my own—no better and no worse.

The plain fact is that there is no reliable data available either to me or to the experts. We are all on our own and there is no more evidence available to support my position than there is to support the position of the abolitionists, except for the great increase in murders which those of us who still favour the retention of capital punishment can quote. They cannot be denied.

I think that I have made my own position clear, Mr. Speaker. I am a retentionist and I make no apology for it. I repeat that on the basis of existing data and evidence, or rather the lack of it, my position is just as tenable as any taken by the experts. I think that I have now made it equally clear that I do not intend to juggle any figures to build my case for retention of capital punishment.

The debate on the pros and cons of capital punishment has raged for many years in Canada. Running parallel to this debate I have noticed a strange sort of pattern develop in our society, fed by the tedious arguments of social workers and do-gooders of every conceivable stripe. These people are first on the scene when a person is charged with a serious crime such as a violent assault, and especially a brutal murder. They are there before the innocent victim has even had a decent burial and before the accused can be brought to trial.

We are told, first of all, that the accused is not to blame for the crime: society is to blame, and the accused murderer is just as much the victim as the person who was murdered. While I do not intend to employ figures to support my position as a retentionist, I will say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a matter of record that the average murderer gets more attention, more sympathy and more assistance than either the victim or the family of the victim. There are all kinds of people who are standing by today to run to the defence of anyone charged with murder or any other violent crime.

Next we are told, if it happens to be a crime for which the death penalty is prescribed on conviction, that the death penalty is barbaric and inhumane. In support of this argument we are told that the death penalty has been abolished in Great Britain, Pango-Pango and any other place that happens to come to mind. We are told the death penalty is out and the only civilized method of punishment is a long prison sentence.

What happens when a long prison sentence is imposed on anyone convicted of murder? We hear that this, too, is inhumane. The idea of keeping a human being caged-up for

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10, 20 or 30 years sends these social workers and a couple of cabinet ministers across the way into a frenzy. How can a modern, civilized society be so barbaric as to even consider caging up human beings as though they were animals in a zoo, they ask? So we have things like weekend passes, supervised and unsupervised leave, time off for good behaviour and, of course, early parole.

What happened to the poor victim, Mr. Speaker? He, or she, has been conveniently buried, and just as conveniently forgotten. We have a new victim to consider—the poor, misguided victim of society. We must all rush to the defence of this victim and we must ensure that no harm shall come to this unfortunate and misguided individual. When I think of the way these people so callously dispose of the victims of crime in their haste to rush to the defence of the criminal, I want to go into a quiet corner and bring up. I also get pretty angry, Mr. Speaker.

It takes a really twisted mind to regard the victim of a premeditated murder as simply a figure in a tally book. It takes an unusual mind to regard the murderer as someone who deserves, and even demands, the sympathy and indulgence of the very society upon whom he or she is preying. I disagree in the strongest terms that we demean our society when we take the life of a convicted murderer. I think, instead, that we demean society and ourselves as legislators when we refuse to take whatever action is necessary to protect the lives and property of law-abiding citizens of our country.

Social workers and do-gooders can afford the luxury of misdirected sympathies and concerns. If other crimes are committed, or if society suffers further misadventures when its theories backfire, then it does not really matter: it is back to the drawing-board. These experts on social conduct hold themselves to be above rebuke and censure. They hold themselves to be unaccountable—and they have at least two champions of their cause over there on the government benches.

I say to the Minister of Justice and to the Solicitor General that their responsibility is not to the bleeding hearts, to the innovative, misguided social workers and the other assorted do-gooders in our society. Their responsibility is not to the well-being or the comfort of those convicted of violent crime; it is to millions of law-abiding Canadians, people who must wonder at times whether there is anyone on their side. I strongly urge those two ministers to consider resigning if they cannot take their responsibilities seriously because of preconceived notions about capital punishment.

● (1610)

Unfortunately for the two ministers, they cannot afford the luxury of playing around with innovative social experiments. They cannot afford the luxury of showing how civilized they can be by turning dangerous criminals out on the streets just to see if they will commit more crimes and then bring them back to coddle them some more. I am not a retentionist because I want to see the state take the life of criminals; I am a retentionist because I have seen this government's stupid and senseless experiments in prison reform fail utterly over and over again.

Like the vast majority of Canadians, I am fed up with a system that allows, and even encourages, the criminal