

and the protection of society as a whole? Are those rights not deserving of consideration and protection?

We hear that the guilty party is a product of his or her environment and is therefore not responsible for his or her actions. I believe that we are all ultimately responsible for our actions, and must be held accountable. When are we going to see a focus on individual responsibility and accountability in our society?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jepson: I respectfully suggest, Mr. Speaker, that responsibility fosters a just society; an undue focus on individual rights fosters rebellion. Our criminal laws must be based on justice, and under those laws a person must be responsible for his or her actions.

The 1978-79 statistics show that the average time served in prison for attempted murder before being granted parole was four years and nine months; for manslaughter, two years and nine months; for kidnapping, two years and six months; for rape, two years. What kind of a message do those statistics send to society about the sanctity and value of life, about justice in our society.

In looking at the issue of capital punishment, it is important that we look at the over-all justice system. And in looking at the plea bargaining system, at the parole system, at the bail laws, and all other aspects of justice, we see that there has to be a tightening up, there has to be more accountability. We must send a stronger message to society. It must be made clear that we will not tolerate blatant abuse of the laws of our land, blatant abuse of the protection and rights of all Canadians.

The abolitionists in this debate have a concern about error, about the possibility of an innocent person being executed. Since Confederation, there has not been one person executed who was later found to be innocent. Yet, since 1920 there have been eight murderers released, with the resultant loss of 11 more innocent lives. Many of those victims had a full life ahead of them, with expectations and dreams. They were simply snuffed out.

We speculate about the margin of error in the court system, with no concrete evidence that in fact it works against the innocent. We do, however, have concrete evidence to support the fact that 11 innocent lives have been snuffed out by repeat offenders, by murderers who had been released.

I have faith in our judicial system. I have faith in the men and women of Canada who are involved in the judicial system. I have faith in the due process of law, with the exhaustive appeal system that is in place.

Those on the other side of this issue are constantly throwing out this red herring about the possibility of an innocent person being executed. They cite the Donald Marshall case as an example of a situation where an innocent man could have been taken to the execution chamber. We know better than that. Donald Marshall was charged with, and convicted of, second

degree murder, not first degree murder. What I stand for is capital punishment for first degree, premeditated murder.

We hear the Biblical quotation "an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth" as justification for vengeance.

Mr. Speaker, what that scripture is saying to us is that we must have sentences that are commensurate with the crime committed. It is not that the punishment for cutting a person's arm off is to cut off the arm of the perpetrator of that act; that the punishment for killing a person is necessarily that the perpetrator of that act should be killed.

What we are saying is that we must have punishments commensurate with the crime committed, and I do not believe we are seeing that in the operation of our judicial system today. I repeat the statistics cited earlier. For attempted murder the average prison sentence is four years and nine months; for manslaughter, where a life has actually been taken, the average time in prison is two years and nine months. I find such sentences hard to comprehend in our society today.

We also hear those on the opposite side of this question quoting scripture, "Thou shalt not kill". What the scripture says is, "Thou shalt not murder". It cannot be said that the state, in carrying out an execution, is murdering or killing; what the state is doing is executing judgment.

Romans 13.1.6 tells us that God places Governments in authority over the people, to provide for the protection of society. Those who commit no wrongdoing or evil have nothing to fear; but those who do break the law, those who do commit crimes of violence, have to fear the "execution of the sword", as it is quoted in scripture. In other words, they have to stand fully accountable under the law.

Furthermore, Genesis 9.6 says, "Who so sheddeth a man's blood by man shall blood be shed."

I believe scripture very clearly states that capital punishment is in order for first degree premeditated murder.

We heard the New Democratic Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) talk about the stands of the various churches. There is no question that the executives of the United and Anglican Churches, as well as the Conference of Catholic Bishops, have stated that they are against capital punishment. There is no question about that. However, they are not speaking for their memberships. If they were speaking for their memberships, it would be clearly reflected in the polls, yet we see that for a number of years the percentage of Canadians in favour of capital punishment has hovered between 60 per cent and 70 per cent. It is quite obvious that they are not speaking for their memberships; they are speaking as executives of the respective churches.

● (1220)

Turning to the question of deterrence, I agree with my friend from Saskatchewan who spoke before me that it cannot be conclusively proven that capital punishment is a deterrent.