

*Criminal Code*

Britain, as hon. members realize, has abolished the death penalty for a five-year trial period. The veteran labour member who has led the fight in Britain for the abolition of capital punishment for years is Sidney Silverman. Last year he enjoyed the fruition of his campaign and capital punishment was abolished for a trial period of five years. It is interesting that during the recent election campaign Sidney Silverman was opposed by a close relative of a little girl who had been the victim of a horrible sex slaying. He rattled all the chains he could during the campaign but to the eternal credit of the British people they elected Silverman with a greatly increased majority.

That is the kind of thing that happens when people are prepared to make decisions with their eyes open on the basis of facts rather than emotion. Emotions should be considered and then put out of the way so that the facts can be deliberated and decisions made.

Over and over again during this debate hon. members have referred to the fact that in Canada we have in effect had no capital punishment, de facto, since December of 1962. Even before that time Canada's position on capital punishment has been weakening. When the former government divided the categories of murder into capital and non-capital it took a step in the direction of manifesting Canada's maturity in civilization and its ability to do away with capital punishment.

That was the first step toward the abolition of capital punishment. The second step has been the attitude of the government in not carrying out the sentence of death since the latter part of 1962. I suggest these steps are indications that this country has been readying itself for complete abolition of the death sentence. There would be a tremendous outcry by the people of Canada if pending executions were carried out as a result of a vote in this house to retain capital punishment. The people of this country in increasing numbers have become aware that capital punishment is not consonant with these times. In ever increasing numbers they are becoming prepared to do away with this form of barbarism.

Not long ago I received a letter, as did every British Columbia member, from the B.C. Corrections Association. This letter is dated March 18, 1966 and it states in part:

We felt that you, as a British Columbia member, might be interested to see an expression of opinion on this issue from the present membership of

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

our association. We represent all facets of correction and rehabilitation in British Columbia. This association sent out a questionnaire in which they asked the recipients of the questionnaire to indicate whether they were in favour of complete abolition of capital punishment, abolition except in respect of capital murder of prison personnel and law enforcement officers, or retention of capital punishment. There were 64.3 per cent in favour of complete abolition, 25.7 per cent in favour of abolition except for the capital murder of prison personnel and law enforcement officers, and only 10 per cent in favour of retention.

In other words, this is representative of all types of people involved in criminal correction and rehabilitation in British Columbia. This association sent out a questionnaire in which they asked the recipients of the questionnaire to indicate whether they were in favour of complete abolition of capital punishment, abolition except in respect of capital murder of prison personnel and law enforcement officers, or retention of capital punishment. There were 64.3 per cent in favour of complete abolition, 25.7 per cent in favour of abolition except for the capital murder of prison personnel and law enforcement officers, and only 10 per cent in favour of retention.

It is my opinion that if 64.3 per cent of a representative group of people working closely with criminals are in favour of the complete abolition of capital punishment, the majority of Canadian people are ready for its abolition.

I was greatly impressed by the speech made by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Byrne), as well as by those of others. I should like to quote and to endorse this observation of the parliamentary secretary:

A nation which debases the value of human life by its extinction cannot hope to lead in the area of preventative diplomacy.

That is my last reason for suggesting that Canada should abolish the death penalty. We hope to be among those nations of the world which believe in civilized values. In order to acquire a leading position among such nations we must advocate the sanctity of human life.

People throughout the world are watching carefully to see whether or not leaders of nations are acting as they are talking. If we act at home the way we talk abroad this nation will be a leader among nations, but only then.

In conclusion, I hope that we have the courage now to decide that Canada should be placed among the civilized countries which have, with their eyes wide open, done away with capital punishment. I hope we place ourselves in that position with the sure knowledge that this will help us at home and in our role among the nations of the world. I believe that if we abolish capital punishment on a trial basis, we shall never decide to reinstitute it. In order to satisfy some of the fears expressed by hon. members perhaps we