

Capital Punishment

demand the restoration of capital punishment. They possibly are more humane and/or knowledgeable than those who accept the 25-year prison-without-hope as an alternative for capital punishment.

It may well be that if the public is not permitted a catharsis in its present anger and fear, perhaps even revenge—which so many of us do not like to discuss, but which I dare to express, if the public is not allowed the opportunity to express its disapproval at indiscriminate killing and maiming, we could seriously rupture the basic order of society and make violence an acceptable way of life, with the law-abiding citizen its tormented pawn.

The impression is that the lawbreakers, wrongly, of course, seem to be receiving the state's protection and succor, while those who live within the law and want to be safe and decent are left to fend for themselves; that the underworld is taking the controls from those assigned to set and administer the law. This is a reality. Just recently an undercover worker, a stool pigeon for the police in Vancouver, said he could no longer help them in drug cases. He said to the police they had only seven year sentences for murder, but—out there—on the street—they have capital punishment. He was killed within two hours after telling them what was happening on the street.

Julien Critchley, member of parliament for Aldershot in the British House of Commons, an abolitionist throughout his ten years in parliament, reversed his position because he said, and I quote:

We may rupture the link between people and parliament, bonds that have already loosened.

There is no doubt that the Critchley statement is applicable here today. Those who can rely on Edmund Burke of the 1770's, here in the 1970's, will no doubt meet the same fate at the polls as he did. The voters of Burke's time, in the 1770's, and those who have elected us, have the right to be represented and not to have a member of parliament's conscience superimposed on the majority.

Fortunately I have long been of the same opinion as my constituents of Vancouver-Kingsway in the matter of capital punishment. I know them to be good, just, fair, and humane people. They are people of a wide range of education, knowledge, and experience. They are professionals, tradesmen and tradeswomen, and labourers. They are stable people who, in the main, own their own homes, and many were born in the homes in which they still live. These people have seen what every Canadian can soon expect to see, unfortunately, and that is their quiet, peaceful neighbourhood turned into one of the most violent areas in Canada.

My constituents may be losing their cool over the issue before us now, and I understand how the unwarranted, unnecessary statements by one man could have caused so much anger. A total of 79.3 per cent of these people indicated they want capital punishment restored. Since then, and that was a year ago, they have let me know that they feel even more strongly about this matter in hundreds of letters, phone calls, visits to my office, and petitions, and in cold anger at the fact that a member of the cabinet has threatened to resign if he did not win his bid for abolition. They are angry, not in a partisan way, but at all of us who sit in this House and act as though their wishes are irrelevant.

[Mrs. Holt.]

I consider my constituency an all-people riding, variegated with many economic, social, and cultural factors; a microcosm of Canada. The day I cannot act for them I will leave this place. I can assure all of you here that if you do not act for the majority Canadian constituency, all of us as well as the job we do here will be irrelevant.

I oppose every aspect of Bill C-84, both within my own conscience and on behalf of my constituents. First, I oppose the abolition of capital punishment in cases of premeditated, deliberate murder, not only for the killers of policemen and prison guards, but also for those who cause death in the commission of such ruthless crimes as kidnapping, rape, highjacking, armed robbery, and assault.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Holt: I would also like to add the worst and cruelest murderers of all to the list who should face the possibility of death for his or her horrendous crime; those who commit mass murders, maiming and inflicting extreme, if not excruciating pain—the drug trafficker, the non-using drug trafficker, who has not one single decent motive or shred of kindness and whose only objective is a huge income out of the sale of torture and death.

Besides drug deaths, these people are responsible for ordering or contracting murder by others of anyone daring to compete for even the smallest share in a vast market. They also murder anyone who might be a problem, even for crying out too loudly with the cramps and excruciating pain that comes when deprivation of the drug begins. Capital punishment could certainly be a deterrent in these business crimes, and this would certainly stop many who merchandise narcotics. I challenge anyone who says it would not be a deterrent in that area.

Secondly, I am opposed to this bill because the alternative, what is seen as a trade-off for abolition, is even more cruel than anything the hangman can do. This is day-by-day torture, human waste, and anyone who has spent any time watching a man in prison knows what I mean. This is torture for 25 years or 9,125 days without hope. Approach your own life in this way. Think of that time in relation to your own life, or your child's life. It is also a licence to kill others trapped in the same prison; the inmates and guards.

The sentence of 25 years to someone 20 or even 25 really means living life out in a prison. To the 20-year old, age 30 seems like senility. Remember, to them, everyone over 30 seems old and nearly dead. He sees himself in prison until he is 45. The 25-year old sees 30 as old, 40 or 45 as near death, even the end of life. He will be there until he is 50 years of age. His years of love, marriage, family, and productivity will be lost. There is no reason to live. He can see it.

● (2130)

I should like to refer to a man I know and for whom I have been fighting for years. He went in at age 21. He is still there in the penitentiary at 42. He went to prison for shooting a man who called his wife a whore in a nightclub. He said, "They will not hang me and will not let me hang myself." He tried repeatedly. He had no reason to live and now they have extended the time of parole eligibility for two years more—as if two more years of his life were nothing. The younger men will be more dangerous, but