

Capital Punishment

someone defended himself with a firearm against a criminal, and he had to spend eight months in court to defend himself...

Mr. Kindy: With a lot of money!

Mr. Hamelin: With a lot of money. That is unbelievable. It is topsy-turvidom!

Do I want a society based on statistics? Because robbery exists, robbery is normal? At the limit, let us encourage robbery. Many of those sociological considerations are mad. I often have the feeling that our society is bent on false progress. Is removing capital punishment really moving forward? Because in Canada any clot will come here to get impunity. Why not! Welcome! We do not kill, we are a civilized country. We will accommodate your fits of confusion. They also come up with the argument of miscarriages of justice. I would like to know how many times our policemen have failed to get criminals convicted through some faulty procedure in court or otherwise. How many times have crimes escaped punishment due to some faulty procedure, or the absence of a last minute witness?

And when the Parole Board makes a mistake, when it releases someone who commits another criminal act, does it not also bear a very heavy responsibility?

Mr. Kindy: It is negligence!

Mr. Hamelin: Is it not an amazing lack of courage?

Madam Speaker, I too want this society to be tolerant, to be respectful of our differences, but that tolerance must stop somewhere in the end, otherwise the whole system is going to collapse. In fact, it is already collapsing! There is a vital need to reform our whole penitentiary system, to review our justice system, to review the whole sentencing system. We should bring a lot of energy into that whole process, otherwise I think everything will collapse.

I am therefore going to vote with my heart tonight, Madam Speaker, in favour of setting up that Committee which will examine the best methods to carry out this ultimate penalty in the case of those who do not deserve the right to live and those who have used their freedom to deprive others of their own freedom forever. Of course, Madam Speaker, I could elaborate at length on the amazing problem of victims who no longer have the right to speak, who no longer have any right at all. And I think this country should at least keep this ultimate lever and not pretend that we are civilized people because we have lost that sense of responsibility and accountability. Such is my deep conviction, and it is widely shared by a vast majority of my fellow citizens. As a free man who loves this country, I want the citizens of this country, men and women, to respect as a whole the rules of the game, and my freedom should not entitle me to take other people's lives. However, ultimately in this society, it is my legitimate defense, my ultimate defense, and I have been denied that defense for 20 years.

I feel that something is wrong, that things are deteriorating, that this situation is inconsistent and unacceptable, and that is why I deeply feel, Madam Speaker, that we should at least avail ourselves of that tool of justice which is not an easy one to apply, which is a difficult one, but which bolsters our democratic system of responsibility and freedom.

● (1300)

[English]

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, before I start my speech on capital punishment, I want to reply in part to the statements made by the Conservative government House Leader. He has stated that closure has been necessary because the Official Liberal Opposition and the New Democrats would not agree to the shortening of speeches and hence to a time frame. Everyone knows that 75 per cent of the Members of the House sit on government benches and only 25 per cent sit on opposition benches. This makes a farce of his excuse for bringing in closure on this debate.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): That's irrelevant.

Mr. Hopkins: The truth of the matter is that the Government wants to get this motion off the Order Paper—

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Where was Herb Gray?

Mr. Hopkins: The fact that government Members are now shouting at me for bringing out the truth of the matter indicates that it is really hitting home. People will not be surprised by this motion for closure backed up by that weak excuse because the public no longer has any faith in this Government.

It is indeed with mixed feelings that I rise to participate in this debate on the resolution to reinstate capital punishment. This will be the fifth time that I will have voted—

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member wanted to lay the truth on the Chamber but he forgot the part about the amendments members of the Opposition were moving so that they could speak in an infinite fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The question raised by the Hon. Member is not a point of order but more a point of debate.

Mr. Hopkins: Madam Speaker, I hope that that non-intervention will not be deducted from my time.

As I was saying, this will be the fifth time that I will have voted on this issue since first coming to the House of Commons as the Member for the original riding of Renfrew North which has since enlarged threefold and become the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I have voted for retention on all four previous occasions dating back to 1966.