

### *Capital Punishment*

I remind those Members who say that they are going to vote for capital punishment because their electors tell them that that is what they should do, that the last four Leaders of the Progressive Conservative Party have been abolitionists. John Diefenbaker, Robert Stanfield, the present Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) were and/or are abolitionists. In voting against the reimposition of capital punishment they will be ignoring the views of their constituents because they believe that the principle is so important that they have the duty not to follow the views of their constituents.

• (2030)

I listened to recent arguments of some Members who support the imposition of capital punishment and base their position on their readings from the Bible. I respect their right to express their views, but I remind them that the leaders of all the major churches in Canada, including the Roman Catholic bishops; the former Primate of the Anglican Church, Ted Scott, the Moderator of the United Church; the leaders of the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist and some of the Mennonite Churches, and the Canadian Jewish Congress in its convention, all have opposed the reimposition of capital punishment.

What are the reasons for supporting the reimposition of capital punishment? I suppose the major reason is the belief of some people that capital punishment acts as a deterrent to murder. The record is clear. The facts are there for anyone who wants to see them. Since capital punishment was abolished in 1976, the incidents of murder or manslaughter per 100,000 people in Canada has declined. It was 2.9 per 100,000 in 1976 and went down to 2.6 per 100,000 in 1977, to 2.4 in 1978 and in 1982, the last year for which we have figures, it was 2.4 per 100,000.

If capital punishment does not act as a deterrent, why should we even be discussing whether it should be reimposed as part of our justice system? We are told that we should permit capital punishment for the killing of police officers or prison guards. The Hon. Member for St. Catharines (Mr. Reid) received a letter from a member of the Ontario Police Force, Richard Bagley. He said in part:

—I am a resident of your riding, I am a police officer with the Ontario Provincial Police, and I am also against the restoration of the death penalty.

He went on to say that a silent majority of the police officers agree with him.

The Member for Edmonton South (Mr. Edwards) quoted from a letter in which it was claimed that a murderer was released from prison after thirteen and a half years. The fact is that for first degree murder in Canada the penalty is 25 years of incarceration before parole can even be considered.

If I heard the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosbie) correctly, it seems he suggested that for monetary matters Canadians need the advice of experts and implied that on the question of the taking of a life we do not need that expert advice. That seems a strange approach, if I heard him

correctly, that money is more important than life. It is certainly not a view that I could support.

I ask Members to consider what happens in other countries in light of a question asked by the Hon. Member for Edmonton South about whether the state has the right to impose capital punishment. Let us look at what happens in other countries.

Capital punishment has been abolished in all the democratic countries except the United States, which I believe to be a special case. Capital punishment has been abolished in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, West Germany, Spain, Portugal, Australia, New Zealand and Israel.

I want to talk about two countries in particular. Great Britain is a country that frequently faces murder as a result of terrorist activities. In the last couple of years, they again debated and voted on the question of capital punishment. Despite the fact that there was a substantial majority of Conservative Members in the British Parliament and Prime Minister Thatcher is a strong believer in capital punishment, the House of Commons rejected reimposition of capital punishment by a substantial majority.

Mention was made of the State of Israel. I remind Hon. Members that the State of Israel, if not daily, certainly faces almost weekly terrorist attacks which result in the murder of some of its citizens. It has abolished capital punishment, and when it tried Adolph Eichmann, who was responsible for the murder of tens of thousands of Jewish people in concentration camps controlled by Nazi Germany, it had to pass a special law which permitted it to execute him.

I ask Hon. Members to consider which countries still use capital punishment. Essentially, there are two types of countries: the first is communist countries such as China and the Soviet Union, and the second is the military dictatorships of Africa, Asia and South America. There are too many such dictatorships even for me to try to list.

If I have to make a choice of an example of the right way to proceed on this question, I want to associate myself with the democratic countries rather than the communist countries and those with military dictatorships.

I want to conclude by relating an experience I had in 1976 when we last debated and voted on this question. One day I came out of the union centre in Winnipeg on Portage Avenue and Main Street. I was confronted by an executive member of my constituency NDP association who was also the president of his local union. This man, who had been a strong supporter of mine, challenged me as he was completely committed to the idea that this country needed capital punishment. We discussed the question for an hour and a half as he tried to convince me that I was wrong and should support the imposition of capital punishment, and I tried to explain to him why I was against it and would vote for abolition.

It became obvious that there was no way in which we would change our opinions, and so I sought a graceful way to end the