

Capital Punishment

Was the Member of Parliament who just spoke aware that Burke decided not to seek renomination because of the effect it had on his constituents when he refused even to take into consideration the vast majority of constituents whom he represented?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Hon. Member chose to rise in his place and raise this very important point. I did not know Edmund Burke personally. Perhaps the member across knew him better than I and is aware of the reasons he chose not to run for public office in the subsequent election. I remind him that Mr. Burke was not defeated but decided not to run again. I am sure the member knows the reason for that very well, that he has probably discussed it with Mr. Burke personally.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Bourgault: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the intervention of my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on capital punishment. Of course the question is very sensitive, I admit, except that the Hon. Member is always ready to rise and criticize the initiatives of our Government. They are never good enough for him. In short, he questions everything.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for him. Has the Hon. Member any alternatives? What are we going to do about the 75 per cent of Canadians who are tired, who have had it up to here to see that the victims are never . . . What do we do to family victims? What do we do with them? Does the Hon. Member have an alternative? Did he think about that, or does he get up only to criticize the Government which has the courage, I repeat, the courage to bring this issue before the House of Commons, because it does take political courage to do so? So my question to him is this: Does he have solutions? Does he have anything to say to elderly people who are afraid to walk on the streets—and I know some of my constituents who feel that way because they are afraid of being attacked. There are a lot of trigger-happy individuals around these days. Think about the many corner grocery store owners who have been shot dead by thieves, by second offenders who do not hesitate because they know they will be paroled after seven years even after having been sentenced to life imprisonment. Mr. Speaker, what solutions does the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) have to offer Canadians who want capital punishment applied in this country, something which the previous Liberal Government has never done?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you in plain language that it takes nerve, it takes a lot of nerve for an Hon. Member on the Government side to stand on his feet in this House and ask the Opposition if it has an alternative for better government. That takes a lot of nerve coming from the Government side, Mr. Speaker, I must say. All the more so when a government Member rises to ask us for an alternative to the death penalty. Is there an alternative between life and death? Can one be so ridiculous as to put such a question to the House? I must recall that if there is a problem with parole,

then an appropriate solution must be found. In any other area as well, if there is a problem, then a solution must be found. You do not execute prisoners because no alternative has been found, even if one's Government has come to office with the largest majority in Canadian history. What a sorry excuse to give this House, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member as well as her Government should be ashamed to raise such issues.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if my colleague is aware of studies which indicate that juries do not impose the death penalty, that they are reluctant to do so? Is he aware that such studies exist? Is he willing to make any comment?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg for a very relevant question. He is quite right in raising this matter, because a poll has indeed been taken among people who had served as jurors previously. Very clear results were obtained from that survey in which former jurors were asked: Madam or Sir, had you had to reach a decision knowing the penalty would be death, would you have found the accused guilty in the very case you decided in the past? To a large extent, Mr. Speaker, those Canadians who sat on juries said no, because there was still some doubt in their minds that kept them from sentencing—not sentencing because it is the judge not them who sentences—but they would not have made any move which might have resulted in sentencing somebody to death. So that is very interesting, and we could conclude that indeed the restoration of the death penalty could have a totally reverse effect in the sense that a greater number of those guilty of murder could be released because the jury would be somewhat reluctant to find them guilty. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) has drawn our attention to a very interesting fact.

[*English*]

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) and others in favour of capital punishment argue that they must respond to the wishes of their constituents. They believe that due to the fact that 70 to 75 per cent of Canadians favour the return of capital punishment they must, as a result of some duty, respond by voting for capital punishment notwithstanding what their own personal beliefs may be. I want to say to the Hon. Member for Peterborough and others—

● (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I hope the Hon. Member will comment on the member's speech and not on anything that has taken place prior to the speech of the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria).

Mr. Nunziata: Does the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) agree with my suggestion to the Member for Peterborough that there comes a time when one must vote according to one's own belief and conscience because if one becomes a puppet of his or her constituents, there is really no reason to be here to act as a parliamentarian