

*Capital Punishment*

proud of what our country represented and what our people represented in that this sad state of affairs was not representative of my country.

I have lived as well along with my family in Syria and Israel. We witnessed strife and war and hatred. As we travelled in these two countries and throughout western and a part of eastern Europe, we were always pleased to be recognized as Canadians because Canada represents something to free people and those people who are less than free throughout the world.

I now ask myself, what league is it that Canada wants to join, what strange, unique club among the civilized nations of the world that condone capital punishment, that say it is all right for the state to take a life because it does not respect the dignity of life or the dignity of man? Is this what we have now evolved to as Canadians? Is this the legacy that I will be passing on to my children and my children's children? Is this what I was elected for, to tell the state that it can take a life, it can kill, because I do not respect the dignity of man? I say no, not now, not ever.

I have not come by this decision easily or lightly. I have worn the uniform of our country for over 30 years. I have served at sea, on land and in the air. I was prepared to take life because I was trained to do just that, and I would like to think that if it had become necessary, I was prepared to give my life because I feel that anyone who wears the uniform of his country must in fact be prepared to do just that.

Last summer the good people of my riding, which is small in population, were horrified and frightened by four separate incidents of assault, rape and murder. On a per capita basis, it was comparable to anything happening in any of our major centres. It was easy to think of revenge, it was easy to think of vengeance, and it was easy to want to lash out and strike back. I knew that given these incidents, the majority of the people would support me if I voted in favour of capital punishment.

Although we have been touched by violence, we are not a violent society. As I studied this issue, as I listened to parents who lost loved ones, who wrote to ask me not to vote in favour of reinstatement, as I looked at the statistics, I realized that capital punishment was no deterrence to murder.

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Since 1962, the year of the last execution in Canada, there has been no increase in first degree murder. Indeed, with the introduction of capital punishment there is a great danger, a great fear that criminals could be found guilty of a lesser crime and be out on the streets much earlier.

On that last point, a report by the research and statistics group of the secretariat of the Solicitor General dealt with this question in a report prepared in October, 1985, called "Questions and Answers on Capital Punishment". The question asked therein was, does the death penalty lead to a higher proportion of acquittals for murder because juries are reluctant to sentence a person to death? The report concluded there

is evidence to suggest that the death penalty exercises an inhibitory effect on judges and juries. It cites, for example, a study by the British Home Office which found that jurors were reluctant to convict in capital cases and that findings of guilt would have been entered in some cases in the absence of the death penalty.

An American study dating from 1909, which compared conviction rates in states having capital punishment and states which did not, found conviction rates higher in the latter. In 1968 an Australian study made similar findings. It also makes reference to Canadian research which found that between 1881 and 1967 the conviction rate for murder was the lowest for all crimes of violence.

The report makes the following tentative conclusions. Although other theories might explain this phenomena, it is possible that juries were reluctant to convict on a charge of murder when it was a capital offence. It is possible that jurors are more willing to convict for murder since the abolition of the death penalty.

Finally, I have to advise that in my heart and soul I cannot, from a moral standpoint, in a planned and premeditated manner, vote to take a person's life. We cannot hide behind the mask of the executioner. To my mind the executioner will now be the man or woman who votes in favour of taking a life. It will be his or her hand on the lever, his or her finger on the button, his or her hand holding the needle. If this goes through we can never say, forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do. We do know what we are doing. We cannot and must not place ourselves in that minority league of nations who still carry out this barbaric act. We cannot and must not leave the good company of those civilized countries such as Britain, France, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Italy, the list goes on, who have abolished state killing.

In the words of Arthur Maloney, the death penalty is not the answer to the problem of crime and of criminals. Crime has its cause and crime has its cure. Its causes are clear. They can be stated like a litany. They are poverty, slums, broken homes, drunkenness, divorce, lack of opportunity and lack of education. Those are the causes of crime.

In a booklet produced by The Criminal Lawyers Association of Ontario it is noted that psychiatrists tell us that those who were abused as children are more likely to become child abusers themselves when they become parents. When they were children our hearts went out to them for the trauma they suffered and for what such abuse must have done to their minds. Yet when they become what we knew they had a good chance of becoming, child abusers or even child killers, we want their death. We were not prepared to give them the time, the attention, the resources or help when they needed it. We want to wait and with vengeance repay the death to society.

Of the many letters I received on this matter I do not believe any touched me deeper than the one I received from Lesley Parrott, the mother of 11-year old Alison who was abducted and murdered last July. She said the death of her daughter