

Capital Punishment

save lives is the decision we must make as we vote on the bill.

Another question which must be considered is: Would capital punishment be a deterrent to serious crimes committed in a fit of passion? I suggest that it would not. An individual in the grip of passion acts abnormally. When in the grip of passion, an individual may be driven to commit a crime for which capital punishment is no deterrent. But I submit that capital punishment would deter premeditated acts of murder. The death penalty would save the lives of innocent people on the streets and would be a fit punishment for criminals who murder deliberately. Therefore, those who, like the Prime Minister, suggest retentionists are only seeking vengeance are no longer entitled to the respect of their fellow man. That was a harsh, unfair and improper basis on which to conduct this debate.

There are no statistics to show how well we have rehabilitated those who have been in prison. We know that harsh treatment can sometimes change the mind of a man. Such harsh treatment has been described as brainwashing. We have heard of instances in which brainwashing has been cruel. But, as we know, minds have not been changed. There is no evidence to show that psychology or other forms of treatment can change the minds of hardened criminals who have no inclination to change. There are no records to substantiate success, as might be the case in the scientific world. We cannot measure success in this field with the accuracy with which a mathematician might define a problem. In this field we cannot be guided by laws of nature which work steadfastly and continually in other fields.

In short, one cannot say that men have been induced to change their minds by psychiatrists. I suppose the best example of what I am talking about is to be found in the treatment of those who indiscriminately and unwisely have resorted to the use of drugs. Alcoholics Anonymous have assumed that there is little use trying to correct the behaviour of an alcoholic unless that person really and truly wants to change. The same is true of other psychiatric treatment. When the mind wants to change, it can accept help and benefit from it. However, when the mind of man is determined to remain on course, it is difficult, if not impossible, to treat that mind so that it again fits into the rank and file of society. We are assuming that we can correct a mind that does not want to be corrected. That is an unwise and dangerous assumption. In the long run, it will be proven that it is one that costs lives in this country, not one which saves them. It will be difficult to prove, but I believe that it is the way the mind of man works, particularly that of the hard-core criminal.

● (1250)

I know I am being repetitive and that this has been said by speaker after speaker. However, I am deeply concerned about the lack of concern for the safety of our peace officers in this country. We are being traitors to them when we behave as we are presently doing, and traitors to ourselves and the rank and file of society as a whole. I submit that when knowledge of capital punishment being inevitable is in the mind of a man who premeditates a crime, it is, and must be, a deterrent.

[Mr. McCain.]

This so-called free vote is one of the most capricious things that has been perpetrated upon the people of any country in the name of democratic government. The behaviour of the government and its influential people as this subject has been brought before the House in a pseudo free vote situation is deceitful at best. I believe the people of Canada recognize that there is a free vote only within the limits in which that vote will safely follow the policy of the government. When the safety of the policy of this bill which has been introduced by the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) is in danger, freedom of behaviour will come to an end.

Suggestions are made as to what it might mean to certain individuals in this House if this bill fails to pass. That is a most regrettable thing. While the Conservative party has not been united in its stand on this matter, and its members voted as they chose, at no time has any prominent member of this party asked any individual, by persuasion, force or other means, to change his vote.

Mr. Sharp: Nor has ours.

Mr. McCain: I submit that the evidence at hand indicates that anybody who makes a comparable claim and sits on Your Honour's right is oblivious of the facts as they are known to the public of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allmand: Tell some more lies.

Mr. McCain: There are some people in this House who knew a great deal more about the professions they practised before coming here than they have learned about the profession they have practised since coming here. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane) indicates that he has learned little. He has not listened and has no awareness of what is going on around him in this situation. Possibly he wishes to be oblivious of the efforts being made to compromise the free vote which has been so vigorously promoted as being the will of parliament.

Mr. MacFarlane: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to remind the hon. member that the whip and myself voted on different sides in this situation. I think the hon. member should refrain from references to a free vote.

Mr. Blais: You should not reflect on a vote in any event.

Mr. McCain: I do not remember asking the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain to rise. I do not remember mentioning the whip.

Mr. Sharp: Whom did you mention?

Mr. McCain: I mentioned that the government exerted pressure.

Mr. Allmand: On whom?

Mr. McCain: You know.

Mr. Allmand: No I do not. On whom? Let us have some names.

Mr. Stevens: How about the Lalonde party?

Mr. Allmand: Were you there?