

been commuted in the last few years. To all practical purposes, the death penalty is now completely abolished in Canada. What is then the current situation? Since the beginning of 1975, that is during last month only, more than 30 murders were committed. If that pace was to be maintained over the whole year, murders would total 300.

The honest citizen who represents the greater majority of the Canadian public is worried and wants to be protected according to his rights. He is now sick and tired of having legislation, institutions and leaders oriented towards the protection of criminals, while past or future victims count next to nothing.

In fact, a poll I conducted in 1972 among nearly 18,000 heads of families in my riding revealed that the greater majority were in favour of reinstating capital punishment. As a matter of fact, I am not the only one concerned with this problem. The Quebec Minister of Justice stated a few days ago that he would be very glad to see capital punishment reinstated. The Canadian Federation of Mayors has also made representations in this direction. I should mention many other responsible organizations which have taken similar stands, but I cannot for lack of time.

Madam Speaker, the government has been as generous as it possibly could. Events have indicated that it is practically impossible to assure the security of honest citizens against the actions of the criminally inclined, without the most powerful deterrent of them all: capital punishment.

In the case of hardened criminals who will not regret their crime, no other penalty will solve the problem. If they are freed, they will commit other crimes, maybe raped and murders. In my opinion, criminals of this type who are fully conscious of their acts deserve death.

But it is not only a matter of punishing certain criminals or stopping them from killing again, it is a matter of stopping potential murderers. Everyone knows that fear is useful since it is the beginning of wisdom. We also know that this fear allows organized criminals to protect themselves against informing and errors which could compromise their organization. What works for crime professionals should work even better for potential criminals.

If the death penalty is reinstated, two principles must obviously be followed to reduce crime. First, for the sentence to be effective, it has to be executed. It is not enough that it should be included in the Criminal Code. In addition, I believe that it must be executed soon after the judgement instead of being postponed by unending delays until such time as the crime is forgotten or seems nearly ordinary. Therefore, the sanction must be made an example to have an educational impact.

There is another thing which can be ascertained, and that is that under present conditions, sparing hardened criminals means condemning others, innocent people, to pay the price with their lives. The only thing that remains to be known is who will be the next victims and how many there will be.

For all these reasons, Madam Speaker, I honestly consider that the House must without further delay reinstate capital punishment in Canada and that the sentence must be executed in cases of capital or premeditated murder or murder committed during the execution of another criminal act.

Adjournment Debate

Madam Speaker, I humbly ask the House of Commons to consider this matter as soon as possible to put an end to murders.

Mr. Herb Breau (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity tonight to answer on behalf of the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) to the hon. member and to the comments he made recently in the House about the re-establishment of capital punishment.

As the hon. member is aware, that issue has been discussed in December 1973. Then there has been a free vote in the House, the result of which has been to extend the abolition of capital punishment for five more years.

In December 1977, members of parliament will have another opportunity to express their views on this matter, which is very important and very serious. In fact, they will have to decide to abolish capital punishment or to restore it.

On that point, I would like to say that there is no sufficient evidence that capital punishment may deter or dissuade a criminal from doing wrong. Then, what other reasons should we have to justify such action from the state? Fears of increasing murders of crimes are certainly unfounded. If this were a major trend there would be an even or global increase in crimes throughout the country and not only in some big cities.

I firmly believe that we have other ways at hand, that we have other means to reduce the number of crimes in society. I think that capital punishment is not the solution. I believe that the state might rather show some respect for life; its example might in the long run bring some changes in the attitude and behaviour of Canadians. Although there is no evidence that capital punishment has any effect in the short term on the number of murders, the only assurance of an improvement in the long run might be total abolition.

To revert to the question recently raised by the member in the House on the restoration of capital punishment, I will reply on behalf of the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) that the government has no intention to bring this matter again before the House in the near future. I hope that the hon. member will be satisfied with this reply.

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—ALLEGED PROSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN CHAD—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, on December 17 last I asked a question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) regarding the alleged persecution of Christians in Chad. The reply I received from the minister at that time was restrictive, in the sense that he replied that to his knowledge, or the knowledge of the department, no Canadians were suffering persecution or any undue hardships because of the domestic policies of Chad. I would like to expand on that in the few minutes I have available tonight.

The argument that we cannot, as Canadians, get involved in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state—a principle that Canada has held for some time—I do not