

Criminal Code

example, because in five years' time murder will not be more or less serious than it is today. One must hold fast to one's opinions, especially on an issue as important as capital punishment and, as far as I am concerned, it is inconsequential to attach more significance to a second murder, or the murder of a jail guard or a police officer.

Capital punishment is the supreme penalty for the worst and the most odious crime: murder. I think it should be retained for the protection of society and justice; I do not think society has attained a high enough degree of civilization to abolish it now. When there are no more premeditated or deliberate murders, the battle will be won and we will then be able to amend the criminal code and pin a medal on our lapel.

[*English*]

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, like all other hon. members I have gone through a very difficult period weighing the evidence in this matter and listening to the various arguments presented for and against the abolition of capital punishment. As a matter of fact, I believe I have either read or heard every speech that has been made in this debate and I have been greatly impressed with the calibre of parliament during the debate. As one of my colleagues said elsewhere during the course of the last few days, this debate has done a tremendous lot to permit parliament to recover from the cloud under which we were some time ago. The value of this debate has enhanced this institution and it is surely parliament at its best.

It has not been easy to get at all the truth in this matter and it is by no means certain that we are going to be able to get all the facts, but we must at this stage make a decision on the basis of the great deal of discussion we have had. I believe the time has come for a clear decision. I would not be in favour of seeing this thing hang on or go to a committee, and I do not believe we should clutter up this matter with a whole lot of other material. I think we should make a clear decision on the basis of abolition or retention.

● (7:00 p.m.)

I would be very much in favour of our considering the proposal made both by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and more recently by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon), to the effect that if we are

[Mr. Lachance.]

fearful of taking this step at this time, we should have a period of perhaps five years as a trial, as in Great Britain, during which period we could keep records to satisfy ourselves and everyone within the country that it is the wisest step to take. I do not think that would water down or clutter up the motion. I would be in favour of some such trial period, if the house decided that this would be a wise thing to do. However, I do think we should make a decision on this matter of abolishing or retaining the death penalty.

One of the members who spoke earlier this afternoon felt that he should be in favour of retention of the death penalty because in his view the people in his riding and indeed people all across Canada had the idea that capital punishment was protecting them, that it was very important to leave people with the feeling that capital punishment is a protection for society, and that therefore we should retain it. That is not the way my mind works. I think the people in our ridings sent us here for the purpose of representing them, and that it is our place here to get all the facts we can, weigh the evidence, make decisions, take a stand and interpret that stand for them back home in the ridings and across this country. I feel quite sure we have had access here to material, facts and information to which a great many people in our ridings have not been able to have access.

Were I not prepared to make up my mind as a private member on this matter, I do not think I would be doing my job here, whether or not the majority of the people in my riding are in favour of or against abolition of capital punishment. I have the obligation to make up my mind in the light of the evidence I get and then go back home and stand or fall by what the result will be. I have the obligation to explain to these people the stand I have taken, why I have taken it, and so on.

I wish to say right now that I am in favour of abolition. As a matter of fact I have been in favour of abolition for a good many years now. What I have heard in this debate has convinced me this is the proper stand to take, the correct stand at this time. I am going to adduce just a few of the facts which have impressed me in this debate, and the facts about which I shall tell my constituents when I go back home. I have no idea what a poll would show in my riding. I believe the majority of the people there, given access to the facts which we have had, would be in