

Criminal Code

not particularly care if one of these particular murderers was captured and hanged, because I suppose they must be called the dregs of society.

That is the emotional answer I would give; but the cold, clinical answer is that statistically, at least on the information available in the United States, where some states are abolition and some retention, this type of professional killer does not expect to be captured. They are so cynical of the death penalty that they continue to operate in the main from those states that retain the death penalty when they could quite easily have their base of operations in what is known as an abolition state. I believe that the greatest deterrent the Canadian people can put at the disposal of law and order is not a continuation of the death penalty but an increase in the number of people captured.

● (9:20 p.m.)

The greatest deterrent, I suggest, is the fear of capture, not the fear of penalty in so far as hardened criminals are concerned. If we want to do something about murder, and I presume that is what this debate is all about, we have to hire more policemen. Most of the police forces of the large cities are badly understaffed, as the police chiefs will tell you.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, most of the retentionists have advanced but two good arguments. The first one has been that the death penalty is a deterrent. I hope I have proven to someone's satisfaction, as I have proven to my own, that according to statistics retention does not prevent crime. Second, of course, there are those who, like the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson), quote the Bible so profusely. I can appreciate and understand those who want to retain the death penalty as a form of punishment. A man is entitled to his religious convictions, but quoting the Bible almost indiscriminately as justification for retention of capital punishment does not hold water when one realizes that the state of Israel has abolished the death penalty.

I imagine the Hebrew people have much stronger religious convictions than most people in this room. The Hebrew religion has been the basis of just about every religion. If anyone would respect the letter of the law and interpret the Bible accurately, it should be the people of the state of Israel. Well, they saw fit to abolish the death penalty many years ago. I have promised the whip I would

[Mr. Mackasey.]

be brief, and I know there are many people who would like to participate in this debate. I thank you.

Mr. S. J. Enns (Portage-Neepawa): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the many good arguments which have been advanced on both sides of this question of capital punishment, I find I am more and more persuaded that sincere differences exist between us. After having heard 40 or more members speak to the motion, I find myself in a position of having no really new argument to justify my intervention in the debate at this time. This fact, together with the lateness of the hour, invites me to refrain from delivering what I thought was a well prepared speech. I should like to see the question put tonight and I, for one, am ready for the question.

I rise merely to indicate that when the question is put I will vote in support of the abolition of capital punishment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Forest (Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, the abolition or retention of capital punishment is an important and most controversial matter; opinions are divided and both sides have valid and serious arguments in support of their views.

It is a very emotional subject if one pictures a hanged man or if one thinks of the parents of the victim, so one gets carried away by one's feelings and it becomes difficult to discuss the real issue reasonably and logically. This has too often led to controversy while it should have been discussed coolly and reasonably. We have a heavy responsibility, for human lives are at stake now and in the future.

In view of the situation prevailing these past few years, when capital punishment was abolished in fact if not in theory, it has become imperative for the only competent authority, parliament of the country, finally to take a decision in order to determine whether the government is acting according to the wishes of the majority of the members or whether it is making undue use of its discretionary powers which, in fact, no longer exist when all death sentences are all commuted automatically and indiscriminately. The government was right to put this question to the representatives of the people as soon as possible at this session, because if capital punishment is to be abolished it should be done by appropriate legislation voted by the majority of members of parliament.