

Capital Punishment

neighbours heard her cries for help but did nothing to assist her. They didn't even call the police. In such a climate the criminal understandably grows bolder.

He went on to say:

The death of anyone—even a convicted killer—diminishes us all. But we are diminished even more by a justice system that fails to function. It is an illusion to let ourselves believe that doing away with capital punishment removes the murderer's deed from our conscience. The rights of society are paramount. When we protect guilty lives, we give up innocent lives in exchange.

When opponents of capital punishment say to the state: "I will not let you kill in my name", they are also saying to murderers: "You can kill in your own name as long as I have an excuse for not getting involved."

It is hard to imagine anything worse than being murdered while neighbours do nothing. But something worse exists. When those same neighbours shrink back from justly punishing the murderer, the victim dies twice.

Successive polls over a number of years have shown conclusively that an overwhelming majority of Canadians are demanding the return of capital punishment. I firmly believe in my heart that capital punishment is a deterrent and it does provide an element of protection for society. I have made my position on this issue very clear ever since I sought the nomination in 1984 and later during the 1984 election campaign.

In closing I would like to say again that I will be voting in favour of capital punishment for all of the above stated reasons.

• (2300)

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time in 11 years that I have had the opportunity to participate in a debate such as this. The motion that is before us tonight poses a problem for us. Where do we want Canadian society to go? Do we want to take Canadian society back to the Dark Ages? That is what the supporters of this motion are asking us to do. They want to take us back to an uncivilized society.

It seems to me that what we ought to be doing is spending our time in building and developing a concerned society, taking a look at violence in society, whether it be violence in a dark alley, violence in the home against the wife or children, or whether it is violence on the hockey rink or on the playing fields.

How much of our resources do we put into research concerning violent behaviour? What is it that causes people to behave in a violent fashion? What identifiable tools do we have, what methods and means do we have to assist those who are involved in early childhood education to assist youngsters with respect to dealing with their feelings and expressing them in a socially acceptable way?

We can vote in favour of this motion tonight. We can take Canada back, back to a time in history when violence was the response to violent behaviour. Indeed, we think it is barbarous today the way we treat schoolchildren when they misbehave, to beat the tar out of them. We give them the strap. The strap is supposed to tell them they should not behave violently. What this motion is asking us to do is to kill people who kill people to

make other people not kill. There is something missing in the logic which escapes me. It is the same with respect to the way we treat young children. We respond in a violent way to a child who does not behave in a socially acceptable fashion. We hope that that child will grow up to behave in a sensitive, loving and responsive way.

I want to tell Hon. Members that that has not worked. This motion, if passed, will not work. The supporters of this motion would have us turn back the clock on human civilization.

If the motion is passed, what will happen is an admission of defeat. That is why we have kept the strap in the schools. It is for corporal punishment, which is an admission of failure, that the only way that one can maintain order and discipline in the class-room is to have the strap handy in the drawer. The first son of a gun who steps out of line, the teacher just takes him outside and lays into him. It seems to me that that is an admission of failure. It is an admission of failure on our part. Capital punishment is an admission that society has failed and that, in fact, the murderer has won. He has reached beyond the grave and he has won. The dark side will have won.

It seems that the arguments I have heard from the supporters of this motion say somehow or other that by passing it and bringing back the rope we will create a safer society. That is a false sense of security. All the statistics and all the evidence that has been amassed and presented in the House over the last several days clearly indicates that there is no relationship between having capital punishment on the books on the one side and murder on the other.

It is a nice, easy way for parliamentarians to stand here in the wee hours of the morning and vote for this motion to bring back hanging. We can then walk out of here feeling self-righteous that we have created a safer society and we will not have anything to do anymore. We can pack up our books. We do not have to pay attention to the problem anymore.

That is the challenge for those of us who are going to vote against the motion. It means that we have to keep on seeking to find better ways of dealing with violent criminal behaviour.

I suggest that locking them up in some maximum security prison and throwing the key away is not the way either. I also suggest to Hon. Members that there is a greater challenge for us. Should this motion carry tonight, and I sincerely hope it will not, the streets of any city in Canada will not be any safer. No home in Canada will be safer. No family will be safer.

In fact, by having capital punishment on the books it may very well ensure that murderers get off because juries will be loath to convict when they know—

Mr. McCurdy: They don't want to make a mistake.

Mr. Rodriguez: That is right. The whole idea of not making a mistake remains uppermost in their minds. They may very well be hesitant to bring in a guilty verdict.