

*Capital Punishment*

that this is a matter for the people of our country to settle by way of a national referendum, and I am one who believes that this is the only way it can be settled once and for all. In a survey conducted recently by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association 55,282 people responded that the issue of capital punishment should be decided by a national vote, while only 3,444 felt that it should be decided in a forum such as the House of Commons. In this survey 55,374 people said they believed that capital punishment should be applied in the case of anyone convicted of the murder of any citizen during the commission of a crime. I would take this a step further and say that the act of premeditated murder is the crime which is being committed, and so I cannot distinguish between this premeditated murder and a murder committed during another type of crime.

The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) pointed out in his remarks on Bill C-84 that the abolitionists are playing down the overwhelming public support for capital punishment. The abolitionists say that we should not be influenced by the opinion polls which have been conducted on this subject around the country by various groups and agencies. If the polls were to show that the majority of Canadians were opposed to capital punishment, we would see and hear an awful lot of statistics from the abolitionists. However, they and we know that the polls show that anywhere from 75 per cent to 95 per cent of Canadians want to return to capital punishment, and the majority of them want a return to capital punishment for all premeditated murder.

The survey conducted by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association indicates that 87.6 per cent of the 68,745 people responding to the poll favour a return to the death penalty. In my own riding of Victoria-Haliburton, of the people who contacted me on this subject, 95.66 per cent were in favour of retaining the death penalty for the crime of murder. They are concerned about the alarming rise in violent crime in Canada today. These people are concerned about the fact that the murder rate in Canada has doubled in the past ten years, and that is the actual rate per 100,000 people, as noted by the hon. member for Provencher.

The government has only itself to blame for the present public demands that we reinstate the death penalty for all types of premeditated murder. This government was given a mandate by parliament ten years ago, and this was reaffirmed four years ago. That mandate was about as simple and straightforward as a mandate could be. It called for the death penalty for murderers of police officers and prison officials, but as has been pointed out over and over again in these debates, not one convicted murderer of a policeman or prison guard has been executed.

In every speech I have made on this subject I have asked why there are so many people in our society, in the government and in the private sector who rush to the defence of murderers, while the victims of those murderers are ignored, forgotten and in most cases hardly even given a thought. I agree with those who say that executing a murderer will not bring his victim back to life, but I am convinced that it would serve notice on others who might plan to commit murders that the price is high, too high to make it worth the chance of being caught. I am one of

[Mr. Scott.]

those who feels that the death penalty would be a deterrent to premeditated murder.

I must add my voice to those who ask where our society is going. I join the chorus of those who ask how we could devote so much time and effort to securing the comfort and wellbeing of those convicted of murder and other violent crimes. It is obvious from the volume of mail which all members of parliament are receiving on this subject that the Canadian people are concerned about the kind of society this government is creating in Canada, and it is just as obvious that the great majority of Canadians are not prepared to accept that kind of society.

Much has been said about the manner in which the government should execute murderers, and I know that many people feel uncomfortable about even discussing methods of implementing the death penalty. I share that feeling to some extent, but I do not allow it to influence my thinking on the necessity for applying the death penalty. If anyone has such strong feelings about the inhumanity of hanging, then let us establish first of all that the death penalty will be retained and then seek an alternative to hanging as the method of applying the penalty.

I would like to say a few words about the study commissioned by the Solicitor General on capital punishment. Judging by the negative results the minister obtained from the report on that study, I suggest that the minister would like to forget the report. However, the fact is that the minister did commission a known abolitionist criminologist, a person who presumably came to Canada from Egypt and who quite obviously does not know very much about Canadians to make this study. This criminologist, Ezzat Fattah, who now teaches at Simon Fraser University, was apparently quite upset to learn that his own survey revealed that 70 per cent to 80 per cent of Canadians favour a return to the death penalty for all types of murder.

Mr. Fattah then proceeded to write in his report that these people are vindictive, bloodthirsty, unforgiving, uneducated, insecure, ignorant and harbouring right wing political sentiments. He had other unpleasant things to say about Canadians who feel that those who commit brutal and vicious premeditated murder should pay with their own lives. Mr. Fattah's bias destroys any credibility and any value his report might have had, and I simply put it down as a disgusting spectacle. I must add that I am appalled that the Solicitor General would associate his name and his high office with the report.

By way of contrast I would like to read into the record a few comments which I have received from constituents. A doctor whose son was killed by one of the participants in a fight wrote me a letter which will stick in my mind for as long as I live. The son was an innocent victim, was, in fact, almost a block away from where the fight was going on and was struck by a bullet meant for someone else. The doctor was on duty at his hospital and when his son was brought in hon. members can just imagine his shock at seeing that it was his son realizing that he did not stand any chance of surviving the gunshot wound. The son died in his father's arms, and it is very likely that the murderer will be back on the streets before we resolve this issue of capital punishment. The doctor said in his letter that he was afraid that many hon. members would vote on Bill C-84 according to their own consciences rather than