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In any event, in the past capital murder was punished following fair judgement. I think the time when justice should be forgotten and not be allowed to proceed is not over. However, I am surprised to find that the abolitionists are aware that life is the most precious gift made by God to humanity. They all know that to keep his life one must struggle day after day. In fact, they all know that this invaluable treasure is the most precious gift God made to humanity.

A few days ago, I attended the celebration of the one hundredth birthday of one of my constituents. I was able to see the great happiness experienced by this person at being still alive. You could see on his face his happiness at being still alive with all his lucidity and faculties. On that occasion, I heard very moving tales of heroic actions by our ancestors who saved the life of a mother, of a newly-born child or of a father wounded while working.

As many other members, and also as many other citizens, I cannot understand how members may be in favour of the abolition of capital punishment under the pretence that they consider that as revenge and a lack of respect for life while on the other hand, they are for abortion, namely the murder of innocents who have a right to live, right that was given to us and that nobody could dispute. Why show such a lack of respect for innocent victims and be so compassionate for those who are found guilty of capital murder?

I can remember very well when I was eleven years old and my father lost his wife accidentally as he was helping a needy neighbour rebuild one of his farm buildings. I understood then the self-sacrifice of a father who was helping a neighbour, a fellow citizen and I have kept to this day an indelible remembrance of that generosity, of that charity one can have for his fellow men. But I would not have the same kind of remembrance today if my father had been the victim of a murderer. That is why I can better understand what may happen in the heart of a mother, or of children whose father or mother was the victim of a murderer.

Now we live in society, and I think that we have the right to make certain rules, to pass certain laws, so that we can have mutual respect for what is most precious to us, for what we all seek to preserve, and that is life itself.

Mr. Speaker, it is all very well to say that the abolition of capital punishment has not helped to reduce the crime rate, but we should remember certain statements made by persons in office several years ago; they quoted figures that cannot be questioned to prove that the abolition of the death penalty, on the commuting death sentences by the cabinet, did indeed contribute to a rise in the number of murders in Quebec.

I refer now to the testimony of the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) who, in 1961, as Quebec Minister of Justice, stated, and I quote:

The Minister of Justice, Mr. Claude Wagner, made a strong impression on the delegates at the federal-provincial conference of Attorneys-general and ministers of justice, when he presented statistics to prove that the number of murders has steadily increased in Quebec since 1946, but especially since 1961, when the practice of commuting death sentences to life imprisonment started.

Capital Punishment

What was done, quite simply, was to remove the fear that is essential: the fear of punishment. He showed his statistics that there was an increase in the number of murders and I think that he was right.

In 1965, the present member for Saint-Hyacinthe, who was still Minister of Justice at the time, in a statement published in the newspapers, urged the public to write to the federal government saying that the death penalty should not be abolished. Here was a Minister of Justice who had had courtroom experience, since he had been a judge for some time, and who was now asking the public to write to their elected representatives, to the government of Canada, asking that capital punishment not be abolished.

That was the testimony of an informed man; I think that he had a certain amount of experience, and at that time it was given little consideration. In fact, the Criminal Code was amended, and the death penalty was kept only for the murder of police officers, law enforcement officers and prison guards.

And it happened—as I mentioned in a speech on second reading—that a number of policemen, law enforcement officers and prison guards have been murdered and that criminals were condemned after a fair trial for capital murder, when they were undoubtedly guilty. I still agree with my leader who said this afternoon in this House that the death penalty should be retained for capital murder, if there is no possibility of miscarriage of justice, if the evidence and circumstances show that it was definitely capital murder.

I feel that we should retain that penalty for criminals who in cold blood kill their fellowmen.

I will now quote a former Minister of Justice who was a member of this House, Hon. Rémi Paul:

—Mr. Paul stated in particular that the death penalty was necessary as a deterrent within the community. To abolish capital punishment would mean to believe that right is in the power of the individual, that might is right and that justice leans on the side of the stronger, said that lawyer.

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—he repeated that sentiments have nothing to do with the legislation concerning capital punishment. They consider with too much sympathy the fate of the criminal, he said, and feelings of false pity and love of man lead many people to ask society to avoid capital punishment.

In my view, this is neither a question of vengeance nor of saying like the old *lex talionis*: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This is merely a measure of justice and equity.

In England, in 1971, a lady led a campaign in order to ask the government to restore capital punishment. I have here an excerpt from her statement which has been published September 5, 1971—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, The hon. member will permit me to interrupt him for a moment. He knows that under our rules, he has 20 minutes at his disposal to debate this motion. May I remind him more specifically that we are considering the motion moved by the hon. member for Louis-Hébert (Mrs. Morin).