

*Criminal Code*

I referred to organizations. There are some like the Canadian Students' Union, for instance, which on March 18 sent us a petition for the abolition of capital punishment. It said on page 2:

Of recent date, abolition in Great Britain seems to be the example which best shows an enlightened public attitude toward those offenders.

Mr. Speaker, the students' union doubtless knows, as pointed out by some hon. members since yesterday, that in England, where capital punishment was abolished in 1964, there is a strong movement, and increasing pressure on the government in favour of the re-establishment of capital punishment.

The resolution that is submitted to us reads as follows:

Resolved, that it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Criminal Code for the purposes of

(a) abolishing the death penalty in respect of all offences under that act;

(b) substituting a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment—

Mr. Speaker, I repeat the words "mandatory sentence".

I go on:

—in those cases where the death penalty is now mandatory; and

(c) providing that no person upon whom a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment is imposed shall be released from imprisonment without the prior approval of the Governor in Council.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that paragraph (b) and (c) are conflicting. On the one hand, that life imprisonment is substituted for the death penalty and, on the other hand, in paragraph (c), that the Governor in Council can change this life imprisonment and release a murderer when he so decides for one reason or another.

Mr. Speaker, I organized a referendum in my riding last year, to find out whether the people favoured the abolition of capital punishment. In all, there were 1,300 to 1,400 replies; 736 favoured retention, 595 were opposed to the death penalty and 95 had doubts and told us: Judge for yourselves.

This means, Mr. Speaker, that opinions vary greatly on this subject, at the present time.

As several members pointed out yesterday, capital murder calls for the death penalty. In the other cases, there is often commutation. Indeed, there has even been of recent date, commutation in cases of capital murder, not to say of very capital murder.

For instance, in the infamous Santa Claus case, where two Montreal policemen were

[Mr. Caouette.]

killed, there was certainly murder of the very first degree.

In addition, there is the Dion case, in Quebec, where the man first raped a young girl who was crippled for life. Mr. Dion was set free under the Parole Act. As soon as he came out of jail, he killed four youths. He was arrested and condemned to be hanged. While in detention, he managed to escape and even to stab the governor of the Quebec jail.

With examples such as these, Mr. Speaker, I ask the member for Hochelaga (Mr. Pelletier), who this afternoon, praised social evolution and the progress of the society in which we live, whether he feels he could possibly educate a fellow like Dion or again a fellow like Marcotte?

And there are millions of cases like those throughout the world.

In the light of the resolution under consideration, I wonder if we should not be satisfied with the present law which stipulates that the death penalty is to be imposed in the case of a qualified murder, because we do not believe that it will ever be possible to educate people of ill will who constitute a danger for society, for our own children, for our wives, for all classes of society.

It is not a matter here of one person's revenge upon another. Not at all. As pointed out by an hon. member this afternoon, it is rather a matter of protecting the society against elements which want to destroy it. There are not only cases like the Dion case.

I read recently in a newspaper an open letter signed by Mr. G. Monet, 621 rue des Cèdres, Shawinigan, Quebec. Here is what Mr. Monet said:

The widespread campaign to abolish the death penalty has reached its peak and the members of Parliament will soon vote for or against that measure in the House of Commons.

I read many articles filling a lot of space in newspapers, where considerations ranging all the way from religion to race, from pseudo-religious sects to so-called philanthropic associations, from political parties to individuals—with a lot of statistics thrown in—were invoked in favour of the abolition of the death penalty.

May I state the hidden reason why people want to abolish the death penalty, and no one today has dared to mention it publicly.

Mr. Speaker, I do it more than publicly, as I am reading Mr. Monet's letter in the house so that it will be published in the official record and all the Canadian people can take note of it.