

In conclusion, the death penalty has no place in the compassionate, humane society we all seek to build. Hence I urge with all the conviction I can muster that this House do abolish the death penalty.

As long ago as 1930 the British select committee on capital punishment summed it all up, and I quote:

... and as it is the more humane spirit in our people that makes a more humane penal code possible; so, on the other hand, in humanizing our punishments, we will yet further humanize our people. On the one side, and on the other, humanity will beget humanity, as nobleness enkindleth nobleness.

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Mr. Speaker, this is the third debate on capital punishment in which I have participated. I have listened carefully to the speeches in the debates of the past parliaments. I have read everything available to me on this subject, and my conviction still remains. Notwithstanding the arguments of those who favour capital punishment, I cannot support that conviction. I hold these views, I hold them strongly, and I hold them fully in the knowledge that they may not necessarily coincide with the views of many in my constituency. Indeed they may not coincide with the views of the majority of my constituents. Just as I respect their views, I feel equally that they will respect mine.

The Police Brotherhood of the Newfoundland constabulary, together with their brothers all across the country, conducted a newspaper campaign in which they requested those people who support capital punishment to write in their names in support of a national plebiscite. In my city 106 responded. I make no comment on that except to say that I owe a responsibility to these people, and that is to put forward their views here tonight. That I am endeavouring to do.

I know that they feel just as strongly in favour of capital punishment as I feel against it. Notwithstanding the low response to the newspaper campaign, I know that there are many across the country who share their point of view, although it is interesting that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police through their spokesman, Chief Harold Adamson of Toronto, their national president, said this in a press quote of March 26:

As an alternative to capital punishment, we're satisfied with the 25 years, so long as the man is not released before then.

I do not subscribe to the view that this matter should be the subject of a national plebiscite or referendum. I believe members of parliament were given a mandate by their constituents, by the people of Canada, to exercise their judgments in dealing with all matters relating to the national interest. The vote on the bill now before the House is a free vote. It is a vote in which each member votes according to the dictates of his own conscience, without regard to partisan considerations. That fact makes it incumbent upon all of us as members of this House to inform ourselves as much as possible, and to base our convictions upon the information available to us, and to vote according to those convictions.

I should like to put forward the views of the Canadian Council of Churches because they, very dramatically and very correctly, coincide with my own. I think it is only right that I should put them forward because the Canadian Council of Churches has the responsibility of moral leadership in this country, and the Canadian Council of Churches

### *Capital Punishment*

represents the eight major denominations in the country. I will quote very briefly from its submission:

The taking of the life of the murderer by society does nothing to recompense the victim, his family, or society itself. Indeed, it involves often more suffering for innocent members of the murderer's family.

Retention of capital punishment can be interpreted to mean that society is saying that human life is worthless when it crosses the boundary of our expectations. Thus it invites more violence by sanctioning the execution. The cure for violence is not more violence.

The council goes on to answer those who selectively quote from the Old Testament to support their position for the retention of capital punishment.

The council makes some recommendations in its brief, and I will put these recommendations forward because I support them, because they accurately reflect my own views, and I think they are worth placing on the record:

(a) provide young people and adults with meaningful and satisfying employment and outlets in healthy recreation. We are informed that homicide tends to increase as unemployment grows.

(b) develop the kind of penal institutions now being experimented with which will send persons back into society, not more skilled in crime, but better prepared to make a new start.

(c) reduce the consumption of liquor and other drugs. The records will show a high proportion of violence being committed while under the influence.

(d) improve our capacity to recognize and deal with mental illness. Many murderers are mentally ill and may need extensive treatment and restraint.

(e) minimize the showing of violence on television and in moving picture theatres.

With respect to the last recommendation I was very encouraged by the speech of the Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé) to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. She showed an acute awareness of the gravity of the situation in North America with respect to its preponderance of violence as a means of providing entertainment, and I hope she will go on to translate that concern into regulations, either by way of a directive to the CRTC or by way of legislation in this House. The evidence is in. We have it on very good authority, not only in this country but also in the United States. For example, the Surgeon-General of the United States after a two year exhaustive study came to the conclusion that there was in fact a correlation and a casual relationship between crimes of violence and violence on television. He came to the conclusion that televised violence, with which the media on this continent are so preoccupied, increases aggressive behaviour in young people as well as in adults.

Perhaps more important, televised violence conditions people to accepting violence, and that probably is the greatest threat of all. It makes them passive to violence. I laud the minister for her speech, and I hope she will go on to translate her words into meaningful action.

● (2130)

I was touched by the speech of the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), who spoke from deep conviction. I was equally touched by the speech of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen); he too spoke with conviction. They put forward the arguments in a very clear, convincing and concise way. I, sir, hold the view—and I hold it very strongly—that until we attack the root cause of crime and violence in this country—and I have dealt with one aspect of it, violence on television—it matters very little whether or not we pass