

Criminal Code

suggest a term certain of 25 years or 30 years, about double the sentence given to those who now take part in armed hold-ups.

Like the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch), I have seen a hanging. It took place in Winnipeg in 1948. It was a clean hanging, if one can use that expression about such a brutal event. The memory of it clings to me to this day. It seems to me that the hanging process is capable of being bungled. It is capable of causing torture. It is capable of miscarriage. The graphic description which the hon. member for Vancouver East gave us of the hangman having to jump in to clutch the legs of the person being hanged is one which will stay with a good many of us.

I think we should have some alternative to hanging. In 1961 after considerable debate a formula was achieved which was, I think, a fair one. Murder was divided into capital and non-capital categories. As a matter of fact, the debate could be said to have extended over the previous decade during which a committee of both houses sat to consider this whole matter.

I believe that the formula reached in 1961 should have been given a fair chance to work, say for a period of five years. I still think it should be given a fair chance to work and that is why I intend to vote against the resolution.

• (6:30 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, we will probably be called to vote on capital punishment tonight. This question has produced differences of opinion among the hon. members of this house in the last few days and will continue to do so. It is not a subject to be treated lightly and a discussion of several days cannot produce a solution.

Thus it was an excellent idea to present a resolution before bringing in the bill itself.

I wish to congratulate the sponsors of this resolution who have helped us to go beyond the framework of ordinary politics and given everyone an opportunity to express his opinion according to his beliefs and principles.

Although the matter under consideration is looked at in many different ways, a uniform dignity in dealing with the subject marks its importance. The most varied opinions have been voiced, including sometimes legitimate feelings, and a real effort has been made to adduce sound arguments. Some members even quoted from the Bible in support of

[Mr. McCleave.]

retention of capital punishment, while others quoted different excerpts of the Good Book in support of abolition.

All Christian religions were mentioned, and we found that the great majority of the united and Protestant churches seem to favour the abolition of capital punishment. For what reasons? I shall not venture to discuss them.

Besides, this is not the place nor the time for such discussions. I respect their view, without accepting that the argument advanced by the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert), as reported in the right-hand column of page 3148 of the official report for March 24 when he said

Roman Catholics in the main agree with abolition.

It would have been more correct for him to say: A minority of them agree with abolition.

In fact, the supreme authority of the Roman Catholic church, since we have only one Roman Catholic church, under one authority, did not yet make its position clear and definite on this issue.

Perhaps it is because they wait for the government to take a decision first in this field which belongs to it.

The sole letter of Father Kelly, in favour of abolition, is exactly the exception which confirms the general rule of the status quo for the time being. Besides, Father Kelly himself admits that it is generally the voice of laymen that was heard.

I also listened with great interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Prince (Mr. MacDonald). As a theologian, with an experience as chaplain of certain prisoners, he spoke about difficulties in backing our allegations and our negations in this connection by a single excerpt from the Bible.

Therefore, without repeating quotations from the Holy Scriptures, which were referred to by those who spoke before me, I will admit that I have studied theology myself and that I have yet to come upon a single text which would definitely determine my judgement for or against the abolition of capital punishment.

In fact, religion is not a question of punishment, but rather of love which calls for charity.

Does not the first commandment read as follows: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart? And the second, just as important: And thou shalt love thy neighbour like thyself.