

*Capital Punishment*

Indeed, there was a significant drop of 20 per cent in the murder rate in Canada last year. There was an even more dramatic drop in the rate of first-degree murder. In 1985, there were 338 first-degree murders, and in 1986 that figure went to 260. There is no evidence to support the argument that reinstating capital punishment will save lives or prevent murder.

In the United States, a far more violent society than ours, capital punishment is retained in 37 of the 50 states. We recognize that Canadians' perception of violence is distorted as well and much of that emanates from the media. Violence can only beget more violence. As Gandhi said, "The trouble with an eye for an eye is that it leaves the whole world blind".

If deterrence must be discarded as an argument in favour of capital punishment, clearly the only possible argument in favour of it is vengeance. Vengeance as the foundation for punishment must be rejected in any civilized society.

Recently in my constituency I met with three women whose lives had been personally touched by murder, Alice Shook, Lilian Gamblen and Doreen Helm. I knew Doreen Helm's daughter personally. She was brutally murdered. Alice Shook lost a young daughter and Lilian Gamblen's husband was murdered. These women support capital punishment, not because they are killers, not because they are blood-thirsty or seeking revenge but because they believe that the persons who inflicted pain and suffering on their loved ones must forfeit the right to live. They recognize that this will not save any lives and we must all be sensitive to and feel the pain that they feel. However, we must not allow that pain and suffering to ultimately guide us in redrafting the law.

Other victims have taken a different position. The Leader of the NDP (Mr. Broadbent) has quoted the parents of Alison Parrott who was abducted and murdered. He quoted Esther Aucoin who lost her husband, a member of the New Brunswick Highway Patrol. She read out a statement at his funeral saying that he did not believe in capital punishment and that if he were there that day, he would say that it is the system that needs to be changed so that officers do not have to be alone on duty, and a full radio system should be in place both in cars and in portables.

Let us look at prevention. Let us look at strengthening Canada's gun-control legislation. Let us put more resources and attention toward the problem of domestic violence, including the physical and sexual abuse of children. Let us find more resources for alcohol and drug treatment and education. Let us break the vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, homelessness and crime. Let us deal with the problems of those who are mentally ill and tackle the tragedy of teenage suicide. We should do what we can about violence in the media as well.

Having looked at all these methods of prevention, we must also recognize that there are other powerful arguments against capital punishment. I will not elaborate at length on those arguments because they have been made well by others. There is a risk that an innocent life may be taken. I have a newspaper

here with the headline "Innocent man to go free". After nine years in jail, an innocent man convicted of murder was freed. A young Micmac Indian, Donald Marshall, was in the same situation.

We know as well that it is not the rich and powerful who hang; it is the poor, the illiterate, the uneducated, native people and blacks. As the late United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas stated, "One searches our chronicles in vain for the execution of any member of the affluent strata of this society".

Juries are more likely to convict when capital punishment has been reinstated in a society. Statistics show that clearly. As well, it is possible that some individuals may in fact murder because they themselves are suicidal and wish to have their lives taken. In fact, one individual who was convicted of murder said this to police, "I wish you'd blow my head off. If they had the death penalty, I might think of killing one of those kids. I want to die". That is a suicide murder.

Finally, for those who believe that we should actually place a price tag on human life, capital punishment costs more. It costs more because the appeals are lengthy, dragged out and expensive.

*[Translation]*

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote Robert Badinter, who was responsible for the abolition of the guillotine in France. He said:

We know it will be a long and difficult struggle and that the primitive avenger hidden in everyone of us will be reluctant to lay down his arms. Nevertheless, I am confident that in the end we will win this battle, and so, I say, let us start now and never give up until we succeed.

*[English]*

In conclusion, I would like to move an amendment to this resolution, an amendment which would broaden the scope of the committee proceedings. Having said that, of course my colleagues and I intend to unanimously vote against this resolution for the reasons enunciated by my Leader and I, and for the reasons that will certainly be enunciated by other Hon. Members. However, this amendment would at least improve a process which is already very flawed, a process which denies Canadians input into the fundamental question of whether or not we should reinstate capital punishment. I therefore move:

The deletion of all the words after "That" in line 1 up to and including the word "that" in line 2 and the words "on reinstatement" in line 3.

The effect of this amendment would be to ensure that the committee, which may be struck but hopefully will not be struck, would have the opportunity to hear from those Canadians who are profoundly and fundamentally opposed to capital punishment as well as hearing from those Canadians who merely wish to have input into the nature of crimes for which execution may be an option and the type of execution to be used. I fervently hope that this Parliament will reject any suggestion of the establishment of a committee, and that we will vote down capital punishment. If not, at least this would