

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

letter addressed to the editor in this morning's edition of the *Montreal Gazette*, a great and informative newspaper. The headline over the letter reads, "Capital Punishment: The People's Choice?" The body of the letter reads as follows:

Sir,—In the Canada pavilion at Expo, there were several displays at which visitors could register their opinion on a variety of controversial subjects. One of these carried the question "Should we abolish capital punishment?" The numbers registered on the panel during the last week of Expo were, 19,000 for abolition, 5,500,000 for retention. Even allowing for all possible forms of error, this would seem sufficient to indicate an overwhelming public sentiment against abolition.

Does this have any effect on the people whom we send to Ottawa to represent us?

I am reading the words of the letter addressed to the *Montreal Gazette*. They continue:

It does not appear to. Our M.P.'s obviously do not give two hoots what we, the people, think, or else a bill for abolition could not expect to get any support whatever.

It is my opinion that the main purpose of the instigator of the present bill, the Attorney General, Mr. Larry Pennell, is to avoid the responsibility for carrying out an unpleasant duty. In parenthesis, one may remark, he does not carry out his duty, since all death sentences are automatically commuted.

If Mr. Pennell finds it so distasteful to perform a duty which is part of the job he undertook to do, does he find it equally distasteful to accept the stipendiary emoluments attached thereto?

The logic of capital punishment may be argued from either side, with equal lack of success. This is not a question for thinking; it is a gut feeling. Therefore it is something on which none can be an expert. It only remains then, for the legislators in parliament, to be guided by the obvious wishes of the people they are supposed to be serving.

It is a paradox of our times, that those whose hearts bleed for those guilty of blood by choice, are probably the same people who will support measures to snuff out the lives of the innocent unborn.

The letter is signed, "D. E. Scrimshaw". I do not know the man who wrote the letter but I agree with much that he said. Mr. Scrimshaw's last paragraph also contains a point worth noting. He reminds us that there are other forms of murder, such as the killing of an unborn baby by aborting the mother. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is strange that there are parties and members in this house who would deny the state its undeniable right to take life but yet, in another facet of so-called human progress and survival, would freely allow and vote for abortion on demand. For all I know, and this may be beside the point, the same people might allow the indiscriminate practice of euthanasia in our hospitals.

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

Before taking my seat I wish to ask some questions. In bringing this bill forward did the Solicitor General consult the Minister of Justice? We have heard nothing from the Minister of Justice in this regard—at least I have not heard him speak. He has as much jurisdiction and seniority in this matter as the Solicitor General has—perhaps more. I should not think that the office of the Solicitor General ought to have powers greater than those of the office of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Surely the Minister of Justice does not and cannot totally agree with this bill.

Mr. Orlikow: Did he vote for abolition?

Mr. Alkenbrack: The people of Canada are asking this question. Moreover, did the Solicitor General consult the attorneys general of the provinces before drafting this bill? I am sure that they are not satisfied with it either, and they are called on to enforce and administer the criminal law. Did the Solicitor General consult the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Reeves? Did he consult the municipal associations of the provinces? Did he consult the Association of Chiefs of Police?

Mr. Nielsen: There was no consultation.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Did he consult the Police Officers Association of Canada, which is a separate association. These are some of the questions that the Canadian people are asking.

I wish to ask a question about certain murders committed by immigrants in this country. I shall refer to this matter, Mr. Speaker, because it is of local and national interest. I am informed that last spring here in the city of Ottawa an Italian immigrant was acquitted of the murder of his brother-in-law. The murder arose as a result of a family quarrel.

● (9:10 p.m.)

The jury brought in a verdict of not guilty, though it was the opinion of the general public, of the law enforcement officers and of Judge Donnelly who presided that this was a ridiculously lenient action on the part of the jury. I believe this man shot his brother-in-law twice, using a shotgun. I understand that the accused and his friends put on a real demonstration and celebration in the courtroom after, reluctantly, the judge had to tell the accused he was free to go.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this: Is this man still in Canada? He had only been here some 15 months before committing this act. I