

Capital Punishment

and mine; I am sure that both in his constituency of Lapointe and in mine of Champlain 95 per cent of the people, and I am prepared to bet on this, are in favour of the retention of capital punishment.

An hon. Member: That is true!

Mr. Matte: So, Mr. Speaker, when we are faced—

Mr. Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I say to my hon. friend that I advised my constituents, all 17,000 of them, that I shall vote for abolition, and I received three replies.

Mr. Matte: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that the people of Lapointe will answer him only when the next election comes.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I suggest to both hon. members that they are getting into a point of debate, and I suggest that the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) get back to motion No. 13.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matte: As someone already pointed out, and as the hon. member from the government side said, the Social Credit Party members are like dandelions: the more you cut them, the more they grow. Let there be no illusions on that score.

So, Mr. Speaker, to get back to my point, the vast majority of the Canadian people are in favour of keeping the death penalty, that is, they simply want present laws to apply. That is all the people want. So, how is it that we are being presented with bills no one wants, or only a minute part of the population wants, while overlooking the real problems and the solutions for which the people are clamoring? Those bills are being put through.

To wit, for several years now, and especially since the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has come to power as leader of this country, it has been noticed that we have been chasing things that no one wanted, all the while wasting time as we have now been for weeks, if not months, in this House. Why? Because one day we had a Prime Minister who made up his mind that, if he became Prime Minister, the first thing he would do would be to abolish capital punishment. Second, he would repatriate the Constitution. Third—and it has already been done—he would permit abortion and legalize homosexuality. In addition, at one time he even spoke of legalizing some drugs such as marihuana.

When a man is the leader of a country and he has such ideas and thinks that he must absolutely implement them, we come to the dead-end we have now, since we simply cannot go against the people's will expressing itself as clearly, as plainly as in the present circumstances. Moreover, what should we do about this problem of capital punishment? It is still an individual and personal problem of conscience for each hon. member in the House. It amounts to changing the very rules of democracy, since you have the choice of two things:

[Mr. Matte.]

● (2030)

Either each one of us is here to promote his own little pride or to represent people who want laws pursuant to their principles and ideologies. We have the choice of two things: Either we are democratic representatives or we are not. To my mind, every member prides himself on being democratic. The dictates of my conscience are that even if I were in favour of the abolition of the death penalty, I do have responsibilities to fulfill here because I must reflect the opinion of the majority of the 70,000 people of my riding whom I represent.

I do not think for a moment that it reaches on the borders of my conscience to vote for maintaining the death penalty because, Mr. Speaker, if we want to discuss that point on a philosophical basis, I will not decide, by my vote, to maintain the death penalty or to hang the murderer of John, Jim or Joe. No, Mr. Speaker, it is the murderer himself who decides because he knows that the death penalty will be enforced from now on. The man who commits a reprehensible act knows quite well that his act will bring about the death penalty. I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is not the member for Champlain or his colleagues from the Social Credit Party of Canada or his other colleagues who will decide that that man should be hanged because he will decide by himself. Mr. Speaker, we are defending the principles of individual liberty; consequently, we should give his way to the man who decides so clearly and precisely that he absolutely wants to climb up the gallows.

This may sound like those words of revenge we often hear. Mr. Speaker, if we consider the situation as it is now, we are obliged to recognize that we have had a try with abolition. The law has not been enforced for so many years that we are now able, after a whole decade, to analyze and to come to the necessary conclusions. Consequently, we can say that we have had a try with the abolition of the death penalty. We know the results. I shall not put forward again all the statistics on this matter as we know them fairly well.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who, somewhere in his mind, feels obliged to go to posterity as the one who will have abolished the death penalty, as the one who will have repatriated the constitution from London. Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that we will come to that end. Many of my colleagues opposite suffer the blackmail of the Prime Minister. For several weeks, I have not been able to participate in the proceedings of the House but I could verify, in the field, as we say, the consequences, for our Parliament, of the measures he advocated.

Mr. Speaker, in 1970, during the famous October crisis, the Prime Minister went as far as speaking with a demagoguery that only his attitude could equal. He said, not only to his friends of the Liberal party but also to all members of the House, that the 11 persons now on death row would be sent simultaneously to the gallows if necessary—

An hon. Member: He did not say that.

Mr. Matte: —if the death penalty was maintained. I say that such remarks are not worthy of a man who holds such an important office. It is quite obvious that several of my colleagues opposite bowed to that blackmail. And I believe that explains why the House was pretty well divided in