

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

Hon. members opposite say that capital punishment is barbaric. What is barbaric about it? What have the retentionists accomplished by voting in favour of retaining capital punishment? The matter is out of their hands completely; it is within the control of a government which to my knowledge has commuted every death sentence. There may be some still awaiting the death penalty, but not one hanging has taken place since this government came into office.

No one on that side of the house can claim the retentionists have any control over capital punishment. The government has absolutely refused to exercise the law. By introducing this measure to amend the Criminal Code it is dividing the country into two classes of citizens—policemen and prison guards, and others—and I submit the measure is a complete waste of time. It is an illustration of what obstruction really is.

To bring in a measure which suggests suspending the death penalty on a five year trial basis is ridiculous. Britain legislated for a five year trial period and to date not half of the period has elapsed. After only two years the people in Britain are hollering and screaming for the death penalty to be brought back and carried out. This government goes on its merry way, ignoring the previous decision of parliament, and making decisions which suit their own need about the fate of convicted murderers.

Granted, Mr. Speaker, the life expectancy of the government is not long and perhaps it wants to put something on the record to which hon. members opposite can point in some election pamphlet, and say the Liberals did this and that. In this particular case what they want to do is unacceptable to the Canadian people. The government should concern itself with every-day problems facing the country and should keep in mind at all times the welfare of the relatives of the victims, not the murderer. As was pointed out by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. McCleave) and the hon. member for Queens, who spoke on this subject with far more ability and knowledge than I, these are matters that should be considered by the minister.

● (4:30 p.m.)

The fate of convicted murderers is in the hands of the government. The government is doing exactly the opposite of what parliament decided on a previous occasion. There is nothing that I or any other retentionist in the house can do to change the approach of the government. It has complete control over

[Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South).]

the situation and has not carried out the law or the wishes of parliament. If the government is concerned about the matter, why could it not continue to do what it has been doing in the past. No members on this side of the house who are in favour of retention have, during the question period, asked the Prime Minister, the Solicitor General or the Minister of Justice why certain men who have been sentenced to death have not been hanged. The government is in control. It should not saddle this house with a bill that obstructs other legitimate business which is of vital concern to the law abiding citizens of our country, those citizens who look to this government for guidance.

**An hon. Member:** Emotional.

**Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South):** Yes, my argument may be emotional, but emotions run high on both sides of the argument.

I ask the government to direct its energies toward bringing economic stability to the country. Let us look after the law abiding Canadian citizen; let us look after those who suffer as a result of murder. Let us do something constructive for a change.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alcide Simard (Lac-Saint-Jean):** Mr. Speaker, I have followed all the speeches and listened attentively to all the speakers who were for abolition or retention of capital punishment.

Since the last free vote we had the opportunity to give hardly a few months ago, my attitude on this most important question has not changed, Mr. Speaker.

Let me refer to an article published in *L'Action* on October 23 under the title:

Let us become police officers or prison guards.

I quote:

Such an argument is probably put forward in Ottawa, as it was in other countries, but it is absolutely inconsistent. Let us think it over. If it is true that by maintaining the death penalty against murderers of police officers and prison guards, these persons are protected and this provides for the utmost limitation in the number of victims, why is it that the same argument could not apply to murders in general. If it is admitted that the death penalty can be effective in these two cases, how does one conclude that it is not in all other cases?

By introducing in the commons this legislation which is as inconsistent as it is dangerous, the federal cabinet by implication recognizes that capital punishment represents a protection for a group of society, so that it constitutes also a protection for all society; thus, it should be maintained completely in all cases.