

*Capital Punishment*

● (1610)

In this debate one could quote reams of statistics, but I believe that the common sense of most Canadians is more important than statistics when they state, in overwhelming numbers, that the threat of the death penalty is a deterrent. It is superficial even to suggest that the threat of capital punishment has no deterrent value.

There is no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that people are fed up with the over-emphasis on the rights of the convicted. There is too much emphasis today on the rights of the convicted as opposed to the rights of the victims. I believe it is not only irresponsible but downright immoral to disregard the rights of those who are victimized. It is irresponsible for governments and others to address themselves only to the rights of the convicted and almost totally neglect the rights of the victims.

We, as members of this House, must make sure that our laws concentrate not only on those who have been victimized but also on those who are the potential victims which, by and large, is the whole of our citizenry. A society without that ultimate protection might some day find itself in the sad state where the law of the jungle rules.

I believe the time has come to stop lulling the Canadian people into believing everything will be fine if only they would follow blindly. I for one have more faith than that in my fellow citizens. I believe, Mr. Speaker, Parliament must get its head out of the sand. Parliament must face the fact that our society is not perfect, that crime does exist, that we do have a responsibility to our citizens to fight crime, with every tool available, including capital punishment.

If we cannot settle this important issue of capital punishment here in this chamber, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should take our case to the people of Canada and have a referendum on capital punishment.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize again that I would like to see the reinstatement of the death penalty for those who commit premeditated, first degree, cold-blooded capital murder, call it what you will. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues in this House, that no single issue, certainly since my election over seven years ago, has caused me more personal concern and torment than the issue of capital punishment. To me, despite the wailings of many do-gooders, capital punishment for first degree murder is a deterrent to murder and should once again be reinstated in our statutes. Once it is reinstated in our laws, Mr. Speaker, the carrying out of that law to the full letter of the law must be exercised by those responsible, instead of resorting to mere lip service which would only be construed by Canadians throughout our land as a mockery and a disservice, not worthy of the high office and high position of responsibility entrusted to them by the citizens of Canada.

**Mr. Rod Blaker (Lachine):** Mr. Speaker, I want to respond very briefly to the points made and the issue brought forward by the hon. member who has presented this motion in favour of the death penalty.

[Mr. Mitges.]

I know there are quite a number of other members in the House who want to speak on the subject, so I will be brief and give other members the opportunity to speak. But I also want to indicate that it is my belief that there are two issues which the House now faces in the discussion of this private member's motion. The first, of course, is the issue related to capital punishment, and in that regard obviously the hon. member and every other member is perfectly entitled to express his opinion and to see the matter brought before the House in due course for a vote. The second issue, I submit, is that we are now witnessing something similar to what we witnessed this afternoon when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie), and others, attempted to manoeuvre the scheduled business of the House of Commons in such a fashion as to suit the governing party but not to respect the rights of parliamentarians.

I put to this House, and I put to you, Mr. Speaker, that apparently we are expected to suffer in the House of Commons from promises made during the electoral campaign by the present Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Clark) to the effect that, while he himself is on record as having opposed the death penalty, he has offered an opportunity to the members of his own party in particular, but still to all members of the House as well, that they may be able to vote on the issue in the normal course of business, by way of a private member's motion or a private member's bill.

I want to have the record clear that I think that on an issue of such moral importance—and that is what this issue is about and that is why it attracts such attention, not only in the House of Commons but in the country at large—I find that the Prime Minister of Canada is proceeding in a manner—here I want to repeat a word which I heard the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) use this afternoon, and I will be ready to answer to a question of privilege, if I have to do so—with respect to the death penalty and with respect to the organization of a bootlegging bill, the organization of a smuggling concept to bring the death penalty issue before the House of Commons without the moral rectitude which I think the leader and the Prime Minister of Canada should have, and I find that this manner in which the procedure is being used smacks of sleaziness—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Blaker:** Let it be said also that before I used that word, I indicated to members of the House of Commons—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCain):** Order, please. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Mrs. Stratas) wishes to rise on a point of order.

**Mrs. Stratas:** Mr. Speaker, forgive me if I commit a breach of protocol, but I have been present in the House of Commons this afternoon and I have seen and heard many things, but I cannot sit here any longer when I hear what I am hearing now. So I am rising on a point of order to state that it should be known to hon. members opposite that in this party we act of our own volition. The hon. member who has proposed this bill