

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

and I have full confidence in our R.C.M.P. and other police forces throughout Canada, provincial and municipal. They have as good a record as police forces anywhere else in the world with respect to the apprehension of criminals. I would imagine that anyone about to commit a crime in this country would ask himself: Will I be caught?

The second factor is the punishment itself, whether it be life imprisonment or a death sentence. There is no question in my mind that the death sentence can be an effective deterrent only if the government intends to carry it out; but we know that this government since 1963 has had no intention of carrying it out. Yet in the last three or four years some of the worst crimes ever committed in the history of this country were perpetrated. However, the government had no stomach and was not capable of carrying out its job. Because of this widespread knowledge the deterrent is ineffective.

This bill proposes that the death sentence be supplanted by life imprisonment as the major deterrent. How long is life imprisonment? Last Thursday we were told that the average life imprisonment sentence totals eight years ten months and one day. Is this good enough? At the end of that time those under life sentence are turned loose in society again, and on a number of occasions they have not even been examined by psychiatrists before being released from prisons and mental hospitals.

Only the other day it was stated that there is no psychiatrist serving at the Prince Albert penitentiary, a federal prison, and that there is no psychiatrist in the city of Prince Albert. It can well happen that a person will be paroled without even being interviewed by a psychiatrist. Not so long ago a terrible crime was committed in Saskatchewan. A young man was released from a mental institution, possibly without being interviewed by psychiatrists before being released. In fact I am certain he was not interviewed by psychiatrists, and shortly after his release he committed one of the worst crimes northern Saskatchewan has ever known.

I can tell of an incident in my own constituency. A number of years ago a prisoner was released from Prince Albert, and within two days he did away with his own family, consisting of his mother, his father and three little children. Was that man interviewed by a psychiatrist? Without much difficulty a psychiatrist could have ascertained what his attitudes to society were. Psychiatric services are not available in many of our prisons, and

[Mr. Horner (Acadia).]

I believe life imprisonment is not a good deterrent if it means only eight years ten months and one day.

• (3:30 p.m.)

This is not a good protection for society because we can be given absolutely no guarantee whatsoever as to the behaviour of these people when they leave the institutions. We can only form a judgment in this regard from what has happened in many cases in the past. I do not particularly blame society for this, because I know it is difficult to ascertain the intention of anyone leaving a mental institution or prison. From past actions, however, our judgment must be that this is not a good protection for society.

Therefore, I have no hesitation in voting against this bill. There is nothing to convince me, as a representative of the people in my area, that by voting for this bill I would be creating a better place for them to live or that I would be in any way protecting them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words on this Bill No. C-168 before the vote and before the house decides, definitely I hope, on this matter, that is to say capital punishment in Canada.

About a year and a half ago, a free vote was taken in the house and the result confirmed the retention of capital punishment in the country.

Since that time, murders have been committed and in spite of the wish and will of the house expressed by a majority vote, the government has nevertheless seen fit to ignore it, so that there has been no execution in Canada since 1962.

Now, the purpose of this bill is, and I quote:

—to confine the imposition of the death penalty in relation to murder to the murder of police officers and others employed for the maintenance of the public peace, acting in the course of their duties, and to the murder of prison guards and other officers or permanent employees of prisons, acting in the course of their duties, for an experimental period of five years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that since the practice of commutation was instituted, that is to say since 1962, a period of five years, there have not been any executions in Canada; nevertheless, the number of capital murders has not diminished for all that. Those who intend to kill continue to kill, and they will continue after Bill No. C-168 is passed.