

Capital Punishment

view of that Member's constituency. Sometimes that is a tricky decision to make but it is one each and every single Member of Parliament should be given the chance to make on a question of conscience through a free vote and not with Party Whips attached.

● (1825)

What I cannot abide, Mr. Speaker, is this Government's defiance of public opinion on this and other moral questions. We all know of the massive public desire for at least a renewed debate on capital punishment, and a substantial majority want the death penalty returned for first degree murder. They want that death penalty returned to the Statute books. I said a substantial majority: the latest Gallup poll shows that 72 per cent to 74 per cent of Canadians sampled wish a return of the death penalty. But more importantly, the issue facing us right now, the question we must resolve in this afternoon's very brief debate, is the urgent need for a completely, totally, absolutely free vote on this question.

The Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark), was committed to an absolutely free vote on the death penalty. Under our new Leader, the Hon. Member for Central Nova (Mr. Mulroney), I am confident that it is still the intention of this Party's leadership to reintroduce the capital punishment question at least for debate. I am equally confident that a new Progressive Conservative Government will allow a free vote on capital punishment.

I will conclude by quoting criminal lawyer Louie Nizer, who said it does no good for sheep to pass resolutions in favour of vegetarianism when the wolves think otherwise. This very minute the wolves are slaughtering our loved ones. What in God's name are we waiting for?

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under Standing Order 41(2) a reply shall be allowed to a Member who has moved a substantive motion. I rise at this point to exercise my right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Hon. Member is quite right. However, the Chair has noticed other Members rising to speak at this point and the Chair did recognize the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary in any case. Even if the Chair recognized the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell), it would still have to advise the House under Standing Order 41(3) that the reply of the mover of the original motion closes the debate. At that point in time that then affords an opportunity for any other Member who wishes to contribute to the debate to rise and the Chair would have to recognize that Member. If no other Member rose at that point, of course the Hon. Member for Ontario could be recognized and he would in fact close the debate. But that is not the case because another Hon. Member has risen. It is the Chair's obligation to recognize that other Hon. Member at this time.

● (1830)

I trust that the explanation is satisfactory to the Hon. Member for Ontario.

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, are you then stating that the debate on this motion is not closed if I do not rise within the allotted time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Absolutely. It is standard practice that once we have reached the full hour of debate in any given sitting of the House when dealing with Private Members' Motions, the motion does not die; it goes to the bottom of the list. Of course, it can be resurrected and given greater priority, if there is an understanding between the Parties. But that is not for the Chair to decide. In any case, it does not deprive the Hon. Member of his right eventually to close the debate.

The Chair is attempting to explain that we have not yet reached that point because another Hon. Member who has not yet spoken wishes to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I just want to point out two items. First, the House is now under an order that was agreed to by the entire House that the debate would go for one full hour. This motion states that the mover shall have the right to close the debate. Consequently, when those are put together I contend that the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell) should now have the right to close the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): It is my understanding that the Hon. Member is giving an entirely different interpretation to the agreement reached earlier this day with respect to the proceedings now under way. I do not want to take extensive time but Hon. Members will recall that the situation which faced the House following an earlier vote was that we had gone well beyond the time of approximately three o'clock when we usually engage in Private Members' Business; in fact, it was well past five o'clock. It is the Chair's understanding that there was agreement between the Government House Leader and the House Leaders for the other Parties at least to deal with one item today. They agreed what item that would be and this is what we are debating. However, I do not believe that in any way, shape or form it was the intention of the Parties to that agreement that debate should conclude today on the motion now before the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Tardif: Mr. Speaker, I am aware that this issue was raised in the House on five or six occasions over the past year and a half, as a result of some motions calling again for the consideration of the capital punishment issue, while others called for a referendum. Again, this afternoon, we are being urged to deal with it in a different way through the following motion, and I quote:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of allowing a free vote in the House of Commons on the reinstatement—