

Capital Punishment

peace and order of this country are threatened is clear in the minds of most citizens. That the government's policies, as described above, have contributed to this insecurity cannot be honestly denied.

This present bill is an intellectual compromise, arrived at to bring in abolition in fact when it could not be brought in by law due to the oft expressed opinion of the vast majority of our fellow citizens. Both as an individual member acting on my own conscience and as the representative of the people of Niagara riding, I shall vote against this bill in favour of the maintenance of peace and order in our society.

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, one might deem this to be an historic debate: we debated this subject in 1967 and we are debating it again in 1973. But before I begin to talk about the theme of the debate, which rests mainly on law and order, I would like to make reference to a recent murder committed extraterritorially of this country. I refer to the recent foul and deliberate murder of two young Canadian girls by Zambian troops along the Zambezi River. I call on the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government to demand a national apology to and restitution for the bereaved families of these girls from the Zambian government. Mr. Speaker, I took the liberty to make these remarks knowing that you, too, would be sympathetic.

Secondly, while still talking about law and order, which are the basic requisites of any civilized society, I take more pleasure in my next remark. On this occasion I wish to pay tribute to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as they and this nation mark the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of this typically Canadian body of men. One can truly say that Canada would not exist as it does today were it not for the services rendered in the past by this respected institution. Law and order and the protection of persons and property have been their duty and watchword. As just one of 22 million Canadians, I thank and congratulate the RCMP as they mark their centennial.

I am very pleased to be able to participate in this debate on Bill C-2, a bill that seeks to extend the temporary ban on capital punishment. In one way, Sir, it is unfortunate the recent rash of prison breaks and the concurrent rash of murders of police officials have been occurring at a time when Members of Parliament are attempting to deal objectively with one of the most pressing problems of our time. On the other hand, it has become very clear in recent months that we cannot deal with this problem on an emotional basis. We must be prepared to be as objective as is humanly possible when we decide what we, as parliamentarians, must do in order to ensure that innocent people are not made to suffer because we are too squeamish and indecisive.

We hear over and over again that it is wrong to take a human life even in the name of justice. We are told that legal execution should not be reinstated as an instrument of the state and that there is no evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent against murder or other violent crimes. Mr. Speaker, you and most members of the House know where I stand regarding capital punishment. I say again that I am in favour of the retention of capital punishment, first because of my basic belief—and it is very basic and fundamental—that all civilized nations

[Mr. Hueglin.]

which use what is called the democratic system should never relinquish the right to demand the life of any one of their citizens for certain capital crimes.

Arguments such as those that I have mentioned are specious. In the first place, there is no way that anyone can assess the effectiveness of a law unless that law is applied in the manner called for by its wording. The present government has not applied the law, approved by parliament, that we are debating today. The law as it exists today calls for the death penalty for convicted murderers of police officers and prison officials. This was supposed to extend for five years, during which time we would be amassing some good, solid evidence as to how this law would work if it were made permanent. At the end of the five-year test ban, parliament was committed to decide whether or not the death penalty would be permanently banned or whether it would be reinstated. We are not debating that issue, Mr. Speaker; we are debating whether or not to extend the test ban for another five years. In other words, we are being asked to allow the government to pass the buck to some other parliament five years from now.

This is the same government that was in power when the present law was approved by parliament. It knows very well what the intention of parliament was at that time. It is not surprising that the government wants to put off a decision as long as possible. I do not think that it has anything to do with the question of whether or not it is inhumane to carry out legal executions. The plain fact is that the present government cannot bring itself to make a firm decision on a matter as controversial as capital punishment. Over the past five years the government has commuted every single death penalty imposed by our courts on murderers of policemen and prison officials. Being realistic, I say that is not a good record because they have in this manner flaunted the orders put forward. This was a clear abdication of responsibility, and in a sense was tantamount to flouting the law.

● (1720)

I have said, Mr. Speaker, that the government has tried to follow two courses. I have here an article which appeared in the Kingston *Whig Standard* on Thursday, May 17. The front-page headline reads, "Trudeau backs legislation to retain death penalty". How devious can a headline be? It reflects either very poor proof-readers or a deliberate attempt to fool the readers of this newspaper. It is a perfectly good Canadian press article, but the headline is most devious. Referring to the Prime Minister the article says:

And he assured parliament that commutation of the death sentence for such murders will not be automatic if the bill is approved.

In the very first paragraph, correctly reporting the Prime Minister's speech the writer says:

He reaffirmed his position against the death penalty and he defended the government's actions in the past in commuting death sentences.

How equivocal can the Prime Minister be in his efforts to bolster his faded image regarding protection of persons and property in this country and the carrying out of the laws which this parliament has legislated? It cannot