

*Capital Punishment*

That is how this bill should have come forward. I am sure the government could have found any number of its supporters who would have been the proudest people on earth to act as sponsors of this bill, and possibly the seconder could even have come from somewhere in the opposition. But it would have been a private member's bill and then we would have a true free vote. However, there are other people in this House who decide how things shall be done.

All I can say is that this has been a grievous lost opportunity for actually giving private members in this House the opportunity of expressing themselves and voting according to how they see it, rather than merely being caught up in the party machinery, the caucus machinery and in some other areas where it is said there are powers which have even greater influence on a particular party and its members. I am quoting from a British document which refers to the Trade Union Council, The TUC, which in many instances has to be directly consulted by the British Labour Party and the Labour government in order to determine what legislation shall come forward and what shall be contained in the legislation. I hope we do not have that practice and that we will not turn back the clock in so far as the influence of the private member is concerned.

Rule changes are proposed for this House always under a banner of so-called efficiency. All they do is make it easier for the cabinet. All they do is hack away at the few remaining controls there are; and this is supposed to be a responsible government! Whatever powers there are of examination, of questioning and control of the cabinet by the House go out under the expediency of efficiency.

Then we get the pundits outside complaining about parliament. Parliament itself, under the influence of very overpowering cabinet power, has fashioned its own hair-shirt and has sown the seeds of its own destruction in many ways. To use another simile, perhaps the way has been prepared for the charge that parliament is irrelevant because what is the point of discussion? Government backbenchers sit impatiently because they are precluded from participating in debate—and I have sat on the government side—because cabinet ministers want their legislation to go forward. People are asked blindly to support legislation, not to criticize publicly and not to rock the boat. But that is not parliament. I must say that in this particular debate I was glad to see some hon. members on the government side break those chains and speak independently with regard to this bill.

I and many hon. members have made reference to public opinion. To be subjective, this past weekend I was in Edmonton. I must say that I would not dare put down in *Hansard*, for fear of offending some souls, the nature of the language of the criticism of this bill and of the government which was expressed to me. Only one person, a lady friend of our family, called me and said she was glad that the vote went as it did. I expected that; I have known her as a lifelong abolitionist. I respect her opinion; but she is one of few, and her rights were not being trampled on. Certainly, the government, in insisting on going forward with this bill, is flying in the face of public opinion.

With regard to an entirely different subject, I was rather amused last Thursday when the Prime Minister tried to justify the incomprehensible stand of the government on

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Taiwan within the context of the Olympics. He asserted to the right hon. member for Prince Albert that because the government felt there was a strong majority of the people of Canada supporting its "one China" policy, it was correct in going forward as it was regarding Taiwan and the Olympic controversy. The government said, "Public opinion is with us, and therefore we are right". But what about this particular bill, Mr. Speaker? Public opinion is against the government so if the other argument was correct, this one is equally correct and the government is wrong. If in one case public opinion is used as an argument in support of the government's position, then the government must, logically, rely upon public opinion with regard to this matter.

● (1230)

[Translation]

There cannot be a law for one's friends and a law for one's foes.

[English]

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** There is only one China.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member misunderstood my argument. The argument was used that strong public opinion supports the government. If the hon. member will bide his time—

[Translation]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member on a point of order.

[English]

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a retentionist and I appreciate the speech the hon. member is making. With regard to the policy on China, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has said many times that we recognize only one China, so let us not mix the cards here.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. This is not a point of order; it is an argument which can be made at another time.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** I will start back at square one, Mr. Speaker. The question is whether there shall be reliance upon public opinion to justify the government's stand. On Friday last the Prime Minister used the support of public opinion to buttress his case with regard to Taiwan in the Olympic context. To be logical, the government must have regard to public opinion on Bill C-84; but in this particular case public opinion is to be disregarded.

We have seen the reaction of the police and prison guards to this bill, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to have recourse to, nor would I repeat the worst threats that have been made. I think policemen and prison guards are reasonable people and they have a very difficult job.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** They have been doing a very difficult job with a law that specifically singled them out for protection, but in effect the law was set aside. Now there is being substituted a longer penalty of 25 years'