

the question of compensation for the dependants of the victims of homicide. When the Solicitor General spoke, both in committee and in the House, he attempted to brush off this problem. First of all he said that the matter of compensation was not really a matter he had anything to do with because it more properly came under the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford); and in any event even the Minister of Justice did not have that much to do with it because it was a matter of provincial responsibility.

Unfortunately it is a matter of provincial responsibility. I think that if the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice, and for that matter the whole of the ministry, got off their apathy some changes could be made in this regard. I think that the whole question of compensation for the victims of crime, especially compensation for the dependants of those who are murdered in this country, is a subject that should be discussed here at the national level.

I give the federal government some commendation in this matter since a slight contribution has been made by the government in respect to various provincial criminal injury compensation plans that exist across the country. I must say to you though, Sir, that the federal government had to be forced into taking that position. It was the provincial government of Ontario which in 1967 first came along with a compensation plan for the victims of crime and showed the way. They pioneered this field in this country, and it was only later, when the then federal government saw the wisdom of such a compensation plan, that the government got into it and changed a number of the then provincial statutes in this country to try to bring about more uniformity—I am not arguing with it—across the country for compensation for criminal injuries.

● (1650)

I think we would all agree that the various compensation plans which exist, administered at the provincial level and mainly paid for out of provincial taxpayers' funds, are simply not sufficient. I think this should be tied in with this whole package of Bill C-83 and Bill C-84, peace and security and capital punishment. If there is to be a package point of view, an over-view or a global view by the government in respect of this matter, one of the things it should address its mind to is the whole question of compensation to the dependants of murder victims. This really should be a federal responsibility. It is a very onerous financial yoke on the shoulders of the various provincial governments across the country, and the whole matter should really be handled by the federal government.

Certainly in most of the provinces there is now compensation for the dependants of murder victims, but this is a pretty piddling effort on the part of governments, provincial and federal. Because we are here dealing with a capital punishment provision and amendments to the Criminal Code, I must merely say to this particular minister that with his jurisdiction in respect of the Criminal Code and law enforcement agencies I do not see how he can escape or evade his responsibilities by not getting into this field as well, and at least exerting some pressure on his colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford), so that this matter can be clarified and, hopefully, taken over by the federal government. At the very least the ratio of federal grants or contributions to the various provincial funds should be drastically increased.

Capital Punishment

I merely point out to hon. members that I have not been an advocate of capital punishment in this country based solely on economic grounds; by no means. I merely say this to you, that we are talking here about substituting life imprisonment, 25-year prison terms or 15-year prison terms, for capital punishment. I merely ask members of this House who are here this afternoon whether they have thought of the cost to the taxpayers that such prison terms entail? Are we really not crossing something somewhere along the line, and are we not being misguided in our efforts when we suggest the expending of huge amounts of taxpayers' funds looking after those who commit the crimes, when we contribute darn little to the dependants of the victims of those crimes?

I merely suggest that, if we want to get down to a dollars and cents approach, which I admit is not necessarily the right one, as hon. members vote in respect of these particular amendments and this bill in its entirety they should do just one thing—compare what it costs the taxpayers of this country to house and look after those who commit these crimes with what the government contributes in relation to compensation to the dependants of the victims of those very same crimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is on motion No. 4 in the name of the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made yesterday, Tuesday, June 29, 1976, the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred. At the same time the divisions on motions Nos. 9, 18 and 38 stand deferred.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Those of us who have attempted to propose amendments at the report stage of this bill have been very appreciative of the hard work, the long hours, and the great efforts of the gentlemen at the Table as well as of the parliamentary counsel and other draftsmen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!