

bunch of vultures trying to exploit it and distort it and make it out to be something other than it was.

For the sake of Parliament and for the sake of the political process, I think there has to be more opportunity for MPs to exercise individual judgment. In the minds of the public there has to be more occasion when they can see that it makes a difference to talk to their MP about an issue—that it makes a difference or at least that it could make a difference, because MPs are not always going to agree with whatever group they happen to meet or that happens to lobby them on a particular issue. Nevertheless, there would be a theoretical possibility that in some instances, and in more instances than is the case now, Members of Parliament could exercise independent judgment and not be expected simply to vote the way the Party votes on that particular issue.

People need to feel that it makes a difference that there are 282 minds in this place, that there are 282 thinking beings in this place and not 282 voting machines which, on every occasion, do exactly what their Party requires them to do.

This takes us back to the life of the House of Commons itself and the need for Members not only to have more independent input into a broader range of issues which may fall outside the reach of Party discipline; it also brings us to the question of Members of Parliament having more control over the life of the House of Commons itself.

This is another matter we discussed in the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure. That is why we recommended, for a start—and I can think of no more appropriate day to mention this—that the House have more genuine control over the selection of the Speaker of the House of Commons. The Speaker would have the moral authority of someone who was genuinely selected by the House of Commons.

We also recommend that the House of Commons have more control over the Commissioners of Internal Economy. I do not want to get too far off topic, Mr. Speaker, but these things are all related to the integrity of Parliament itself as the public sees it. Free votes are related to votes of confidence and the need to rid our Standing Orders of all the procedural ways in which matters which should not be votes of confidence are now regarded as such procedurally in the Standing Orders. If that were eliminated there would be more opportunities for free votes or at least fewer excuses on the part of the Government for demanding of its Members that they regard every vote as a vote of confidence. That would make life more difficult for Government backbenchers, I admit, but in the final analysis it would make life better for them because they would be less robotic, shall we say, in their deliberations and they would feel better about themselves knowing that on occasion they could exercise that kind of freedom.

● (1820)

I believe that these are some of the directions in which we ought to move. I hope a number of Hon. Members were listening to my comments on these matters because I feel there is a consensus in the country that the authenticity of the input

of Hon. Members of Parliament has to be greatly enhanced in this institution if it is going to continue to hold what respect it has and to increase that respect.

One of the ways we can do that is by giving to all of our constituents the sense that Members of Parliament make a difference, that what Members of Parliament think and what constituents tell their Members of Parliament makes a difference. The question of free votes and the frequency of them is intimately related to that question. In that respect, I am very happy to have had the opportunity to comment.

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I will take only a very few minutes to state my views on this motion. Tragically, this debate could not be more timely. The nation's capital has just experienced the brutal killing of Police Constable David Utman. The alleged killer has been quoted as saying he wanted to kill a policeman, any policeman. This latest incident has once again raised public consciousness and a demand for a debate in this House on the capital punishment question. The need for a full-fledged debate on the death penalty is probably more important in the 1980s than it has ever been, given the rise in the numbers of violent crimes in our society. What is needed even more urgently, Mr. Speaker, is an absolutely free vote on this highly personal, emotional and sensitive issue.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and Members of his Liberal Government not only refuse to bring the capital punishment question back to Parliament for renewed debate, but the Prime Minister has consistently refused to take off the Liberal Party Whips and allow a truly free vote on the death penalty. The reason, I believe, is obvious. He knows that great numbers of Liberal Members of Parliament would vote according to their consciences and reinstate capital punishment.

Quite apart from my own strong feelings about the need to restore the death penalty in this country for first degree murder—and I am on record in this Chamber as giving my reasons for holding that opinion—there is another fundamental reason for which I support this motion in the name of the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell). We have heard recently that a large number of Canadians feel that Parliament is irrelevant. One of the reasons our constituents have a sense of futility about this place is that they do not feel that we, as Members of Parliament, are legitimately representing their interests. Quite rightly, many Canadians feel Members of Parliament are here only to gratify our own egos and to toe the Party line, regardless of the opinions of the majority of people we were sent to Ottawa to represent. Of course, the electors have to make a choice at election time as candidates from different Parties state their opinions on emotional and moral issues like capital punishment.

Yes, there are constraints on those of us in political Parties to adhere to a particular Party line because we are team players, most of us. But there are some issues, moral issues, the conscience questions, where an individual Member of Parliament must weigh very carefully the decision to exercise his or her own judgment on a case, but keeping in mind the majority