

scolded, as it happens to him sometimes when he makes revolutionary statements.

Mr. Speaker, I say it is shameful for a government made up of such respectable men as those we have there, to be forced to introduce a bill as compromising as that, to get out of an embarrassing situation. The question should be put frankly: Are you for or against the death penalty? If a majority of members of parliament decide in favour of its retention, let us comply with the wishes of parliament if we really believe in its value as a representation of public opinion. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, there is something amiss.

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): We voted on that question last year.

Mr. Mongrain: That is true; the measure was put to a vote last year and the government took it upon itself to commute the sentence of all those who have been condemned to death since.

Mr. Gauthier: That is ridiculous.

Mr. Mongrain: My colleague, the hon. member for Roberval, says that that is ridiculous. A harsher word could be used and it could be said that it is proof of that arrogance that the opposition has sometimes held against the government, that contempt for the decisions of parliament in which I did not really believe when I first came here, so guileless that I was, and I felt that opposition members treated the government too severely sometimes. But I think that in this case the government has slipped badly, as it has been accused of, and I feel that that is inadmissible.

Mr. Speaker, since when do we appraise the value of human life in the same manner as meat in a butcher shop? Since when is the life of a prison guard deemed to be worth more than that of the hon. member for Lafontaine (Mr. Lachance), of the hon. member for Lotbinière or Roberval, in short, of anyone here, including the Prime Minister and the Solicitor General? Since when can this be allowed to conceal what is actually a procedural error?

I feel that the government would have behaved in a much more respectable manner

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if it had clearly asked the same question: Are you for or against the death penalty? A beneficial result would have been, at least, that each of these debates would have contributed to the education of the public.

As I said earlier, I shall not be forever so strongly in favour on the death penalty, but I say that we should, beforehand, pass certain measures such as, for instance, the reform of our penitentiary system and obtain the assurance that our penitentiaries will be provided with all the experts required to ensure rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, I think the spineless attitude of the government, an attitude I would describe as scandalous and disquieting, will contribute to deepen the menace of anarchy facing Canada today. We are at a point where so much freedom is being claimed for our people that it degenerates into licentiousness and orgies in many cases; we have reached the point of defending bandits, traitors and spies with more courage, and we might say with more eloquence and more virulence, than we seem prepared to use to protect the public weal. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether it is not time to put a stop to this attitude and to show that the government is firm enough to fulfil its responsibilities.

It is asked: Why should the government have the right of life or death? Why? Because the government has been given the responsibility by public opinion. The government has been given authority by public opinion and they must exert it as well as all the duties and responsibilities connected with it. I would go further and say that Catholic philosophy in which I have been brought up claims that all authority stems from God, and if the government needs the authority to put an end to a life and maintain order in society, the government must fulfil their responsibilities, even if it is difficult to do so. It is even more important in this era of licentiousness we are entering, in which apparently everything is permitted, everything must be excused in the name of this sacred freedom that is claimed and which too often degenerates in orgies.

Mr. Speaker, I shall vote against this bill and I submit that, in view of its incoherence and its compromising appearance, they are