

*Capital Punishment*

especially policemen. It has been demonstrated that jail no longer prevents murderers from killing, it no longer prevents crimes and bloody escapes. For many inveterate criminals, it only prompts them to be still more violent and kill those who stand in their way to freedom.

Hon. members who would be tempted to believe that those fears are exaggerated should read the view expressed by some organizations or newspapers that could not be called prejudiced since they favour abolition of capital punishment. Alleging that the new peace and security legislation, and I quote:

... does nothing more than replace quick death by slow death in a cell ...

... the Human Rights Association declared through its general director, Mr. Normand Caron, and I quote *La Presse* of February 26, 1976:

The only effect of those new amendments will be to create even more desperate prisoners who will be faced with a hopeless future and will not hesitate to attempt to escape.

For its part, the Association of Social Workers in a press release published the same day by the same newspaper gave the government the following warning:

We are aware of the fact that the public is entitled to better protection against criminals, but we do not believe that longer prison terms are the answer to the problem. In fact, we have every reason to believe that extended sentences will only worsen the situation.

The *Montreal Star*, an acknowledged abolitionist, on February 25, wrote the following editorial from which I quote:

[*English*]

Filling the prisons with men doing endless time is the guaranteed way to turn them into time bombs and put the prison staff at terrible risk.

[*Translation*]

This is certainly a comment over which the Solicitor General should ponder in his spare time. And the newspaper *Le Devoir* which is also quite well known and which is openly abolitionist, wrote on the 27 of the same month, and I quote:

Instead of coming back to kill a grocery clerk we see a convict dragging hostages with him inside his cage. The blood of innocent people will be flowing like it did at the British Columbia penitentiary.

This is another extremely meaningful comment by an editor who, as far as I know, is not looking for "sensationalism", at least not always. Mr. Speaker, therefore, in the very eyes of those who are calling for this reform, abolishing the death penalty and sentencing convicts to lengthy prison terms will never do away with the risks of peace keeping officers being killed, especially by desperate criminals who have made murder their profession.

It is precisely because of this sort of people, who have decided to earn their living by being involved in criminal activities that it remains absolutely essential that the death penalty be maintained and applied in the hope that executions will make others think twice before they decide to kill somebody. This is the sole and ultimate protection that is left to us against those who have no respect either for the life of others or for their own. Mr. Speaker, if this bill does pass and the rash of premeditated murder increases in momentum—and I have no hesitation in predicting that it will—a terrible responsibility will rest on

[Mr. Wagner.]

the shoulders of those who will have allowed such a thing to happen.

As far as I am concerned, my conscience does not allow me to run such a risk. This is why I intend to vote against this bill and continue to request the death penalty in all cases of premeditated or cold-blooded murder committed during an escape or an armed robbery. And I should like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that I am well aware that this is a matter for our conscience and also that my past experience and my responsibilities towards my constituents are significant factors in this decision.

● (1550)

**Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska):** Mr. Speaker, once again, in 1976, following the introduction of twin bills C-83 and C-84, we are called upon to discuss a most delicate problem, the administration of justice in times troubled by such various events as the unnerving increase in thefts and crimes that are causing great concern among the people who would appreciate the possibility of living in security in a society that could be better organized.

During the debate on Bill C-83 in March 1976, I said that a number of politicians prefer to blame the rising crime wave on the availability of weapons rather than to seek solutions to economic and financial problems which are in most cases the root causes of the problems afflicting our society.

I also stressed the importance of reorganizing penal institutions in such a way as to provide guardians and those who assume responsibilities the means to develop better rehabilitation instead of keeping prisoners in an atmosphere that is becoming especially for the younger ones a school to learn all the inveterate criminals' tricks. No doubt that following its study in committee some amendments could be made to Bill C-83 with a view to making it applicable and preventing the many disadvantages resulting from ever too complicated legislation and regulations.

A few years ago, on the occasion of earlier debates about the methods used on the matter of sentences imposed on convicted criminals, the members of the House of Commons had the opportunity to vote freely on this issue fraught with consequences and full of general interest. That attitude represented some improvement in the light of the usual concept related to procedures within the political parties in our so-called democratic system.

I was under the impression that under the circumstances this procedure would have contributed to ensure in a practical way the respect for free speech within our parliamentary institutions. We would have at least contributed to create a climate whereby everyone would have freely assumed his responsibilities. Besides, this is what the citizens in this country want: that their representatives act in Parliament according to the country's general interest rather than according to their party's interest, in order to bring about a real improvement of the situation in every respect.

Unfortunately, this freedom of opinion among members seems much more restrictive in 1976. These restrictions are probably due to the fact that the majority government wants to use these means of action to facilitate the passing of this bill.