

Capital Punishment

the House that because of the ministerial statement Government Orders will be extended by 56 minutes beginning at 1 p.m.

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that the last speaker on the debate on April 28 was the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano), a member of the Liberal Party. If the Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson) then that means there will be two Liberals in a row.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): My records show that the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) was the last speaker in the debate. However, I will confirm that.

Yes, it was the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre who had the floor last. He spoke for 22 minutes. He was the last Member to speak, and he is a member of the New Democratic Party. Therefore I feel that it is only fair that I should recognize the Hon. Member for Trinity.

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell) again I would like to say that prior to the speech made by the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre the Hon. Member for St. Catharines (Mr. Reid) had the floor. Prior to him it was the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano) who spoke.

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, with most Bills and with the numbers we have in the House I think it is only fair that the speaking order should be a government Member followed by a member of the Opposition, and then a member of the Government and then a member of the Opposition. That is normally the way we have conducted debate in matters such as this. I feel that with the numbers we have in the House it is only just and fair that we proceed in the manner which I have outlined.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): We have had this problem before. There are times when the Chair cannot see a Member from another Party rising and therefore recognizes the Member who does rise. In this case I have recognized the Hon. Member for Trinity.

As debate goes on I will try to balance the numbers accordingly. The Chair will recognize those Members as the Chair sees them.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. May I remind the House that in this debate we are in a situation which is not at all comparable to a government Bill. What is before us is a motion put forward by the Government for the House to debate and on which a free vote will be held. I take it that we are not working on the basis of a government spokesman followed by a member of the opposition followed by a government spokesman but rather first come first served. If an Hon. Member happens to be standing in his place and no one else is standing then the Chair will recognize that Hon.

Member on the basis of equity and on the basis of the free expression of thoughts on the matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am not about to start to balance off who is speaking for or against the Bill.

Mr. Lewis: We are not asking that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): If the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) has anything to say in this regard then he can meet me in the room behind the chair at a later time and we can talk. I think we should carry on with debate.

Mr. Fennell: I would just like to thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to bring this matter to your attention, and I did. Your Honour has certainly satisfied my needs. I know that the Chair will treat the matter equitably. With respect to what was said by the Whip of the Official Opposition, I had in mind numbers in the House and that the order should be equitable in that respect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Chair always has a difficult time trying to facilitate everyone in the Chamber. I will do everything possible to try to keep everyone happy. The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Trinity on debate.

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, this really is a strange motion that we have before us. Indeed, as my Party Whip has just pointed out, it is a very unusual procedure with which we are faced. We have before us a motion standing in the name of the Government yet it is not to be treated as a government motion.

Essentially, the motion is to establish a committee which will hold public hearings based on the assumption that capital punishment is to be reintroduced, asking for suggestions about the best way to kill people. That sounds to me a gruesome topic for a parliamentary committee. We then learn that the report of this committee is to be voted upon somehow, that it is not a government motion, but that there will be a free vote held. It is indeed a strange proceeding.

Perhaps it is strange because it is indicative of just how very difficult this issue is. Capital punishment is an emotional issue. The Government was not prepared to take a position itself one way or the other but chose this rather extraordinary procedure as a way of meeting the wishes of those of its members who do want capital punishment reinstated.

I would like to say at the outset that the current debate about capital punishment is really a debate about how best to protect ourselves from violent crime. Canadians want and deserve protection for themselves, their families and their communities. I am not convinced that capital punishment is the answer. I think that there are many other methods that would be much more effective.

First, the vast majority of murders committed in Canada are domestic murders. They are committed by people who are related to each other or who know each other very well and