

certainly after 15 years. In any event, from day one it is subject to the privilege of taking an absence from prison with an escort at any time for various periods of time. That is something I feel many are not cognizant of or are weighing properly.

● (1550)

Again I must take exception to the committee proceedings which took place with respect to this bill at second reading. Quite rightly, we were urged to allow the bill to go to committee so we could have intensive study, a review of the bill and proper discussion. I believe that most of my colleagues will support me when I say that in committee we were subjected to a majority of Liberal members who, by coincidence or otherwise, happened to be mainly abolitionists. They insisted, first, that we should have no witnesses before the committee and, second, that our time be limited as far as study of the bill was concerned. On this type of issue I do not think that is fair to the Canadian public.

I ask hon. members to record the number of people who have written to them requesting that they be heard before the committee, or to say how disappointed they were that they were unable to come before a committee of this House to give their evidence concerning this important matter. I have received letters. I can only assume that many other members have received letters from people who have taken exception to the fact they were not given an opportunity to appear before the committee which presumably was to look in depth at the desirability of passing the bill in the form that was submitted.

The seventh point I wish to touch on, very quickly, is with regard to air piracy. Even if you are an abolitionist, surely the fact that every nation surrounding us has air piracy laws providing for the death penalty in case of death ensuing as a result of air piracy requires us to keep the death penalty for piracy. Until other nations on this continent and nations such as Japan, Russia and Ireland, for example, do away with the death penalty, it would be unwise for us to do away with the death penalty with respect to air piracy, at least. Why should we make Canada one of the most hospitable countries for an air pirate when other nations have the death penalty for such a terrible crime? I hope those who vote on third reading will give consideration to that point.

If you like, be an idealist and say that in concept we should be an abolitionist nation. However, we must be practical and realize that many countries of the world are not at that stage. Until we get to that stage, let us not jeopardize Canada needlessly and act irresponsibly by saying we should do away with the death penalty, come what may; that we are not worried about air piracy or any other terrible crimes being committed. That is irresponsible. I hope members who feel otherwise will reassess their position.

The eighth point I wish to touch on is what I feel is a type of distortion by abolitionists. I refer to the argument as to the method of execution. In a sense, the abolitionists like to use the hangman's noose as their symbol. That is not the important question. The important question is whether there should be the death penalty. Once that is decided upon, the method of execution is a very secondary

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thing. I feel that whatever is the most humane method of execution is the one that should be followed. My colleague, the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday), suggested that this could be left to the cabinet: they could decide by regulation the method of execution.

I supported that proposed amendment because I believed it would be a humane way of handling it. It is handled by regulation under the National Defence Act. That is how executions are prescribed. It is not laid down that it must be by hanging, firing-squad or any other way. It simply states in the National Defence Act that by order in Council the cabinet can determine the method of execution in any particular case. Let that be clear. When we speak about the death penalty and its retention we are not necessarily saying that the hangman's noose should be retained; we are saying that, regardless of the method of execution, let us make sure that capital punishment remains a deterrent to crime the way it was in former years.

The ninth point I wish to touch on is one I really believe is related. I am pleased that the hon. member for York South (Mrs. Appolloni) is here. If this legislation passes tomorrow, a new drive will be commenced by those who have been abolitionists, and I do not fault their motives. For some odd reason there seems to be a relationship between the pro-abortionists and the abolitionists. There will be a new drive to make our abortion laws still easier. That will be a retrograde step for Canada. I hope the attitude that is moving some people to support this bill will be arrested short of new legislation to make abortion on demand virtually the rule in Canada. That would be most regrettable.

Mr. Stollery: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As a member of the House who happens to be an abolitionist, I resent the implication the hon. member is making, somehow linking my position as an abolitionist with the abortion movement, on either side of the question. The hon. member should retract that kind of comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I suggest the hon. member should now get back to the point of debate.

Mr. Stevens: My tenth and final point is this. For many of the reasons I have outlined, if Bill C-84 is given third reading tomorrow I can assure hon. members that the subject will not be ended in Canada. New legislation will be demanded by the Canadian public. They will demand the return of the death penalty. I would guess that within a decade the death penalty will be restored in Canada because of public demand.

I intend to make sure, in my area, that in the coming election, whenever it is called, the cards are laid squarely on the table to show who stood for what in so far as the retention of capital punishment is concerned. Basically, on this side of the House this has been a free vote. It is to the credit of the official opposition that it has been free. It is to the discredit of the government that they have faked their free vote. That is why I am so confident that if we go to the Canadian public and spell out the truth concerning this important issue, they will respond with their votes to ensure the death penalty is reinstated in this country, come what may tomorrow.