

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

girl was seized, brutalized and murdered. Yes, we can certainly understand how emotions and passions can be aroused.

At the same time emotions, deep feelings and sympathy can also come to mind when we understand what has happened to the loved ones, the relatives and the friends who are the innocent victims because they are related to or friendly with the person who committed a murder. They are the innocent victims, and unfortunately far too often they are crucified.

It is also possible, and I say understandable, that there is somewhat of an emotional feeling if one has seen a man hang, if one has seen a body after electrocution, if one knows that in past years in our own country men have been hung back to back, sometimes three men dropped through the trap door at the same time, some not killed instantaneously but by strangulation, and if one knows that on at least one occasion in Quebec, the head was torn off a woman. All these things, whether one is an abolitionist or retentionist, can give rise to a feeling of passion and emotion.

I hope, as one who feels very deeply in this matter, that I can speak this evening in a dispassionate manner, in a factual manner, because I believe most sincerely and conscientiously that our decision on this bill should be based upon reason and upon facts. It is because I do feel so strongly that way that, after having heard every speech made today on this subject, I must admit to being disappointed at the approach taken by those who speak as retentionists. I have heard every word that has been said, but I have yet to hear any of those who oppose this bill, who support the retention of capital punishment, put forward one fact to refute the facts presented by the Solicitor General and those who have spoken in favour of abolition.

I have yet to hear retentionists give one fact in support of retention. It is quite obvious that they speak from emotion. This was made particularly clear when we heard the hon. member for Chapeau (Mr. Laprise). He opened his remarks by accusing the Solicitor General of using old arguments, but at no time did he produce any evidence to refute the arguments, new or old, nor did he introduce factual reasoning for the retention of capital punishment. Indeed he went on to an emotional splurge.

Whilst I was listening to the hon. member I could not help but bring to mind what I read some time ago, written by Arthur Koestler, in "Reflections on Hanging." I think he

[Mr. Winch.]

gives the perfect answer, and I would like to quote his statement:

The defenders of capital punishment have produced no evidence of their own, nor contested the correctness of the documentary material assembled by royal commissions, select committees, etc.; nor even tried to put a different interpretation on it. They simply ignore it...when challenged they invariably and uniformly trot out the same answers; there is no alternative to capital punishment; statistics don't prove anything; other nations can afford to abolish hanging, but not us.

It was interesting to note that the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) continued basically along the same line as the hon. member for Chapeau, except that he did bring in a few comments and statistics. But, Mr. Speaker, I would draw to the attention of hon. members that he never followed through on his statistics. He never in any way tried to refute the factual record of 45 nations that have abolished capital punishment, some of them going back to between 100 and 140 years of abolition. He never showed that their record of homicide, on a percentage basis, compares most favourably with countries which are retentionist, and in many cases have a lower percentage ratio of homicide than the retentionist countries.

I was most interested when the hon. member for Red Deer mentioned the statistics in the states of the United States that had abolished capital punishment, and later came back to it. But there he stopped. He did not dare compare the homicide ratio over a period when they were retentionist, moved to abolition and returned to retentionist; nor did he compare their ratio with that of other states because, if he had done so, he would have found there was over-all in these states, whether retentionist, abolitionist, retentionist and later abolitionist and retentionist again—and of these latter I think two or three have become abolitionist again—he would have found there is always the same broad picture and relationship, proving that the facts about homicide do not have to do with whether states are retentionist or abolitionist, but are dependant upon economic and other factors.

• (9:00 p.m.)

When the hon. member for Red Deer rose to his feet to speak on this important bill I said to a couple of my colleagues behind me that I would make a bet that before he sat down he would bring in "God's will" or the "written word" and, lo and behold, he did not let me down; he did not fail me. He concluded his remarks—and I wrote them down—with a reference to the will of God