

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

which we are faced in this chamber at this time.

The Registrar General spoke of the desirability of compensation for the victims of murder. I suggest to him that the victims of a murder include the relatives of the murderer. They are the victims of the crime just as much as are the relatives of the person who died as a consequence of the act. I hold no brief for brutality, killing or murder. But I suggest that if any of my relatives should commit a murder I would feel just as much a victim of that crime as members of the family of the direct victim. I say that the bill which is before this house at the present time, in essence, does in fact concern itself with victims of murders, because part of the charity and part of the Judaic-Christianity contained in the compromise legislation being piloted through the house at the present time by the Solicitor General is intended for the relatives of the murderer. The bill says that the family of the unfortunate man or woman who happened to be the instrument of fatal forces over which, for one reason or another, he or she had no control, or failed to exercise the proper control, should be shown some charity. That family would be given hope that such a soul might be saved, and that such a person need not necessarily be committed to the gallows.

Therefore, I suggest to the hon. Registrar General, that on one level it could be argued that this legislation does concern itself with the victims of murder. However, with respect to the specific category of the direct victim about which he was speaking, I concur in his point of view. I believe this is something to which long ago we should have addressed ourselves. But I suggest that he is obscuring the basic issue at this time by talking about matters of that kind. There are many such things which are needed in this society. Perhaps this will come next. But let us not drag red herrings into a highly emotional issue.

The Registrar General said in effect that he would be voting for this compromise bill because the majority of Canadians stand for retention, and only such a limited bill could pass. I hope I am not misconstruing the import of his remarks. I think this reflects a pretty serious repudiation of the whole responsibility of leadership. I suggest that in his capacity as a minister of the crown, it is his duty to give the people of Canada some leadership and some direction on a question like this, not merely to follow.

Early in his remarks he said he was intellectually in favour of abolition. I wonder how one can be intellectually committed, be a minister of the crown, be a man who has the capacity for leadership and the potential which he has, and fail to bring more than compromise, accommodation and acquiescence into an issue such as this.

In respect of the bill itself, I suggest that it is impossible for a retentionist to support it in full conscience. It is equally difficult for the abolitionist to do so. A few moments ago my Winnipeg colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said that this is a difficulty which should not be allowed to cloud, sidetrack or abort our deliberations on this bill. He suggested that merely because it is not perfect, because it does not go all the way, because it does not satisfy the full conscience either of the retentionist or the abolitionist, we should not conclude that it compromises our positions, and decide to hold out for something better. I believe this is a valid anxiety and I feel the same way myself.

Some people like myself, who believe in abolition, very well might feel that this bill is not worth voting for because it does not go all the way. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has given expression to this anxiety, and has pointed out that it would be unfortunate if people came to this conclusion. He suggested that those of us who are in favour of abolition should be willing to take half a loaf if we cannot have the whole thing, and that we should regard this as a kind of milestone and worry about the next half of the path after we have passed the first milestone. I believe I subscribe to the position of the hon. member in this regard, although I am not happy about the compromise and accommodation into which I am forced.

● (9:40 p.m.)

I wonder why special consideration for police officers and prison officials has been written into this legislation. My friend and colleague from Digby-Annapolis-Kings (Mr. Nowlan) said in a speech on this subject last Friday that police officers and prison officials have been delegated by society to work with the offenders about whom we are talking. I do not often disagree with my colleague the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, but I disagree with that assumption. I do not believe these prison officials and police officers have been delegated by society to work with these offenders. I believe they have chosen that line of work for themselves. I