

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

raise an eloquent voice and ask that this killing of civilians in totally unjustified wars be brought to an end.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that if we have so much at heart the sacredness of human life, there are still thousands of Canadians who die for lack of means to pay for the expensive services their cases require; those who are rich can afford them, but the poor cannot, due to all sorts of complications in our social legislation. Hundreds, if not thousands die, Mr. Speaker, and there is an effort to be made in that area. Our time would have been better spent, these past four or five days, in looking after the welfare of these special cases and we would have saved many more lives; we would also have saved innocent lives instead of guilty lives and we would have served Canada.

Mr. Speaker, since we are speaking of the respect due to human life, thousands of people are dying throughout the world. I know that Canada is making an effort to try and supply those countries where people die of hunger, while Canadians are living in abundance, but I say we should endeavour to increase our efforts, and instead of saving the lives of two or three criminals a year, we would be saving thousands of lives. Thus, we would contribute to further increase the consideration the people of the smaller nations may have for this country called Canada, which should be a symbol of peace, charity and mutual assistance throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said that our role is to provide for the rehabilitation of criminals, not for their being put to death. I agree to that, but everyone says that our penal system is obsolete and out-of-date, that our prisoners are kept like wild beasts behind bars. Everyone knows that our jails lack essential staff; we have an inadequate number of qualified guards, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, pedagogists and doctors; we are short of everything, even of material facilities, such as proper jails. That is so true, Mr. Speaker—unfortunately, I do not have the figures on hand—that each year, a rather large number of prisoners hang themselves in jail, because penal system is so obsolete and intolerable.

With regard to that rehabilitation argument, I say that we put the cart before the horse. Let us start by setting up an up-to-

[Mr. Mongrain.]

date penitentiary system, by equipping that system with the necessary experts and then, I shall have no objection. But, let us start by reviewing our legislation, by educating our magistrates, by making sure that those we sentence to imprisonment for capital murder can really be rehabilitated to a certain extent, at least, and will not later on present a danger to society and will be able to contribute usefully to the common good, and not wallow in the emptiness of inaction, if not in other unbearable conditions.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, that argument is not acceptable either. I shall even go further than that by saying that this bill represents moral compulsion for some hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, this is the proof I give now—we say that the truth comes out of the children's mouth—it is probably the youngest Liberal member who had the naivety to give us the reasons for that legislation. This is on page 4163 of the official report, and it is a statement by our friend the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Choquette) for whom we have a great deal of admiration. He gave us a lesson in linguistics this afternoon. He almost fascinated us, we rushed to encyclopedias in order to follow him. But, sometimes there was a certain inconsistency in some of his statements; he happened to contradict himself. I want to quote now a candid confession for which I commend him. On occasion he speaks frankly, which is to his credit, and he tells us this:

This year, my philosophy has not changed much—

Of course, he has to be forgiven for his little capers, since they do happen sometimes in the Liberal party—

—but the context is different: the government is in a quandary.

There is the reason for the bill, the hon. member for Lotbinière just told us: the government is in a quandary.

—This is a non-partisan debate; we must say things as they are, see facts as they present themselves. And, when I say that the government is in a quandary, I mean the whole government machinery: members of the opposition as well as government members—

Of course, it was necessary for him to camouflage that so as to avoid being sent for by his whip tomorrow morning and being