

members in opposition to this motion will talk it out. However, some time in the new year when our parliamentary reform package is accepted, we will have an opportunity for a more in depth debate and an opportunity whereby all members can put on record, in the form of a vote, their stand on this very important issue facing the Canadian people.

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, this has been a great day for Parliament. We had the guillotine between three and four, and now we have the rope between four and five.

Mr. Nystrom: That is not a bad line.

Mr. Axworthy: No, it is not a bad line.

The resolution before us could be properly characterized as one of mixed motives. We should not be trifling with this issue in the way in which the hon. member introduced his resolution. He seemed to be far more concerned with matters of coddling prisoners, softness in society, do-gooders, bleeding hearts, and all those kinds of totally spurious judgments about what he thinks is wrong in society.

Somehow that has become confused with the introduction of the death penalty. Somehow all those questions of what he thinks are loose morality will be solved if we start hanging people, and somehow all those questions of licentiousness and degradation which he thinks are sweeping the country will be solved by putting someone in a chamber or on a scaffold! That is not the kind of debate that we should be conducting. If we wish to debate the return of capital punishment, then we should be debating what it is, a punishment for murder.

Capital punishment will not solve the problems of softness in society, the problems of coddling prisoners, or of dealing with all the other kinds of apprehensions of the hon. member. It will deal with the simple fact of murder and the punishment for it. Let us define our terms properly and not confuse the issue. The problem is that if we allow the terms of reference posed by the hon. member to be used, then we will be debating the wrong issue. We should be debating the causes of this issue.

No one would argue that there may be breakdown in the normal order or the fabric of the family, but it will not be solved by representing to Canadians that a simple act of execution is the panacea for all these problems. If the hon. member thinks that that will solve all those problems, then he is sorrily mistaken because, in fact, it will add to the problems. People will say, "Now it is all over. I can relax because they brought back the scaffold and all these problems will disappear". These problems will not disappear because capital punishment has been reintroduced. These problems will exist and continue to exist, because there are other reasons for their cause which are totally unrelated to that act of murder which the hon. member would like to punish with another act of murder.

We should be aware of what we are debating in this resolution. We are not debating the softness in our society. We are debating a very specific solution to a very specific problem

Capital Punishment

and, as a result, the onus is on members opposite who will support this bill to show why a change is necessary.

There is a great cry that Parliament should speak on this issue. Well, Parliament has spoken. No debate took more time than the debate on this issue in the House three years ago. Should we have a revolving door Parliament where every time five newly elected members can review the laws again? Parliament has debated that issue, and it is disrespectful for our members here to suggest that the members at the time were being frivolous in their concerns. I have read those debates, and it is very disrespectful to those members.

● (1650)

We have the same debates going on in the provincial legislature in which I sat at the time. We are debating the same thing simultaneously. It is an issue of some importance. I do not think it is proper to say somehow that it was an act of intimidation. The last speaker suggested that there was arm-twisting and acts of intimidation.

An hon. Member: Prove it.

Mr. Axworthy: That is what you have to do. You have to prove that. Otherwise your resolution is really unwarranted at this time.

I have heard members here say that public opinion says it is the right answer. At the same time I have listened to Conservative members say that they do not give a damn about public opinion when it comes to PetroCan, but all of a sudden they are very sensitive to public opinion on capital punishment. What are you choosing? Those public opinion polls you want to read? If you want to read a public opinion poll, I suggest you read the one that came out last Tuesday which shows that this government is declining in credibility. That is the one you should be reading because people really do not trust what you are up to any more. That is the poll you should be looking at. People want a serious government getting at serious problems. I would suggest that they would be much more effective, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite would spend their time introducing resolutions to deal with many of the social and economic conditions in this country and not worry about this particular problem. It has been debated, and it has been decided by this Parliament.

An hon. Member: Filibuster.

Mr. Axworthy: Our filibustering is simply an act to defend the rights of this Parliament. That is not filibustering. That is all it has been.

If one gets down to the issue, the onus of truth is on members opposite. They must show, somehow or other, by abolishing capital punishment in this Parliament that that has added to the incidence of murder, that it has added to the insecurity of society, and that it has endangered safety. Yet, the member opposite in his resolution did not offer one shred of evidence to prove that. He did not show one single fact to demonstrate his case other than to say that he is appealing to