

*Capital Punishment*

**Mr. Nielsen:** If I might have the attention of the minister for a moment—

May I call it one o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the suggestion of the hon. member that we call it one o'clock? Is that agreed?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At 12.55 p.m. the House took recess.

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, just before the luncheon adjournment I was dealing with the need for this bill to be before us at all at this time. Over the noon adjournment I went to my files in order to get a press release that was issued by the leader of the New Democratic Party, and I contrast that press release with the stand that that party is taking today. In their press release last November, they said the election had made it clear that Canadians want action without delay in a number of areas, and that parliament should meet as soon as possible to deal with them. Thereafter, they listed in order of priority the matter of jobs to cure unemployment, cost of living, fair taxes, and they called for an immediate substantial increase in the basic old age pension. They also raised the question of family farms, native peoples, Canadian independence and electoral reform.

Apparently all that has now gone by the board in this new marriage between the government and the NDP. I reiterate that, instead of having this matter before parliament at this time, we should be dealing with these more urgent requirements of the country. In my own personal view, it would be much more appropriate for this bill to be debated in the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. But that is not going to be the course followed, by arrangement between my hon. friends to my left and government members.

Obviously, hon. gentlemen opposite were frightened when the NDP indicated that they were not going to support Bill C-125, and there had to be a change of approach. What has happened now has been that Bill C-125 has been withdrawn and the NDP and the government will be putting their heads together. The NDP will be telling the government what they want in Bill C-125, and then the bill will be brought back to the House. That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what is going to happen. The tail to my left is going to wag this big brute of a dog that is opposite.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Does the hon. member want Bill C-125?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Certainly, and we want it as soon as possible. We should have it now, instead of this bill. When the bill is brought before us we will certainly make our position on it known. We want action taken on these pressing

[Mr. Nielsen]

matters that the hon. member's party on November 15 declared in their press release were so important to them at that time, even though the importance now seems to have been lost in this marriage of convenience.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** We made our position on Bill C-125 clear, which is more than you have done.

**Mr. Nielsen:** We shall do so. We say that it should be here now. But regardless whether or not the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) denies it, I know what is going to happen. There is going to be hanky-panky between the two parties. Those to my left are going to be telling the government what they require in the bill before it comes back to this House, and there is going to be a lot of haggling in the meantime.

If this bill were examined in committee, it could be studied in detail and expert witnesses could be summoned, if the committee so wished. This House could then proceed with other business in the interim. We should be debating these urgent matters to which I have referred. Debate in committee would let this emotion-charged issue have a thorough and objective examination.

In his opening remarks the minister dealt with the question of deterrence. The abolitionists say that the retentionists—and the minister put the onus on the retentionists—cannot produce any figures to show that the death penalty acts as a deterrent. I put it to the minister and hon. members that nobody can produce any statistics in this regard, for those who are deterred from committing crime do not volunteer that information to anyone. So to say that the death penalty is no deterrent is to say that men do not fear death, and I find that to be a rather incredible assertion.

● (1410)

Fear of death, Sir, in my view is an instinctive reaction, and to conquer or subdue that fear is a feat of which some people are not capable. In wartime fear of death operates thousands of miles from the battlefield, one mile away and on the battlefield itself. No one who has seen death in its many forms can say, and be believed, that fear of death is not a powerful factor in determining any course of action. That is not to say that many criminals are not completely reckless and fearless, but there must be many others criminally inclined who shrink from risking their lives.

The minister has quoted statistics, and he has quoted the Fauteux report. He has referred to a slight increase in rates. That reference, in my view, is a gross distortion, based, as it is, on inaccurate statistics. The only statistics that can be quoted in a debate of this nature are statistics compiled by the courts referring to convicted murderers. These statistics say nothing about the hundreds of cases that are reduced from charges of murder to manslaughter or to mere assault, and nothing about the cases of attempted murder, and only those that go to trial. So the use of statistics does not prove anything on either side of this argument for or against, or for expansion.

The minister quotes statistics as between Maine and New Brunswick. I could quote just as many statistics on the other side of the fence to show just how useless