

Capital Punishment

our consideration of Bill C-2, to maintain in effect the existing legislation for the next five years.

• (1530)

Now the hon. member for Louis-Hébert proposes, in her amendment, the following new sub-paragraphs:

"(b) in respect of a male person, where such person causes the death of a female person while committing or attempting to commit rape, and

Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that nowadays we hear so much talk about the equality of the sexes, I would also have added "in respect of a female person, where such person causes the death of a male person"—That happens too, and the law must be made equal for all.

Mr. Speaker, in sub-paragraph (c) the hon. member for Louis-Hébert proposes, and I quote:

(c) in respect of any person, where such person causes the death of a human being while committing or attempting to commit an offence under section 247, or, if while committing or attempting to commit that offence, such person abandons a human being and death ensues as a consequence."

Mr. Speaker, this is an amendment that cannot be defeated. I believe, however, it will still not be sufficient. Only this morning I could read about so many squaring of accounts in the Montreal newspapers during which two or three persons were murdered last night.

Everywhere we sense a lack of security among people. People are afraid to walk the streets because of hoodlums who are not afraid anymore or scarcely afraid of the law. They are sentenced to life imprisonment. After 20 years, they are released, if not after ten years, and they cannot be rehabilitated because society is not adapted to that kind of treatment. For instance, is there a member of Parliament who would employ a former convict upon his release from prison? One would be frightened at once and would say: He is a murderer; he has been in prison and his rehabilitation is almost impossible. Let me point out, Mr. Speaker, that in some cases, it may be possible, but it is often impossible, and in most of the known cases in Canada, it was impossible. Indeed, as the hon. member for Louis-Hébert said a while ago, when she made an inquiry among prison guards, asking them about their opinion, they said: If capital punishment is abolished, we quit right away. And it is true.

Recently, I took part in a hot line broadcast in Vancouver, from my hometown in Rouyn, for an hour and a half, during the broadcast of Mr. Pat Burns, whom many have known when he was in Montreal. And among the people who called me, there was not a single abolitionist.

Recently, during the program "Choc du futur" on radio station CKAC in Montreal, there was a two-hour discussion on capital punishment and the amendments submitted, and the abolition of capital punishment was firmly opposed.

I sent a questionnaire to thousands of citizens in the province of Quebec. All, without exception, were for maintaining capital punishment, but not as it was 15 or 20 years ago, when risks were taken and innocent people executed, but for capital punishment when there is infallible proof without the shadow of a doubt. If there is some doubt, then let the prisoner benefit from it. But if there is not the shadow of a doubt, Mr. Speaker, the population of Canada

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

is not for abolishing capital punishment, and that is why I suggested to the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) not to take my word but to hold a referendum across Canada and ask the people what they want. The Prime Minister answered that hon. members had to take their responsibilities because they are elected to represent the people. We have not been elected to abolish capital punishment, however. This is not true.

The hon. member for Louis-Hébert said earlier that hon. members who are at her far right—we are at her far right too but to the left of the chair—are in favour of the abolition of capital punishment. Yet, at the same time, they are in favour of abortion. In fact, in the name of society, of humanism, these people claim that we should not take the life of the murderer. And if a mother which has been pregnant for two, three or four months decided to abort, this would be justifiable, according to the members of the New Democratic Party. Then they will tell us that they thought about it. This is a strange way of reasoning.

I defy any hon. member of the New Democratic Party to make a random inquiry in his own riding on the timeliness of abolishing capital punishment and he will see that people are not in favour of it. This is why I am asking for a referendum. In fact we receive letters from people from all parts of the country who are opposed to the abolition of capital punishment. We receive a great number of letters from everywhere, even from former justice ministers. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner), for instance, adopted a definite position against the abolition of capital punishment. Yes, we are in favour of improving law. The law must be changed not only to protect prison guards. I want my wife and my children to be protected and I want hon. members to be protected too.

If an hon. member is attacked or killed by a murderer, there is no capital punishment whereas this punishment would be given for the murder of a prison guard—I feel much sympathy for them because they are human beings like others, neither superior, nor inferior. I am for protecting these people, but I want the whole society to be protected in the same way and no treatment of favour for a few people. A law applicable to the whole Canadian people would be necessary and I am convinced that when the murderers see the sword of Damocles or the rope above their heads, they will be a little more hindered in their movements.

Mr. Speaker, we will have a chance to get back to this amendment. In fact, there are two amendments before the House and we will have the opportunity of getting back to this bill on third reading, just as we had today the opportunity of doing so in order to discuss this question again which should have been deferred till fall so that members of Parliament might go on vacation just like anyone else. But they preferred to introduce this bill at this time. We shall discuss and struggle with the best of our energy in order that this bill does not come up for third reading. As far as the amendments are concerned, we shall certainly support them because they already represent an improvement over the existing legislation which provides that only the murderer of a prison guard may be sentenced to capital punishment by a court, and this is not enough.

I repeat that every human being is entitled to live in security, has the right to feel free in a free country, and