

*Capital Punishment*

The public begs and pleads but the Prime Minister, and therefore his cabinet, simply do not listen nor care. What kind of security and protection does the public have when the Prime Minister and his fawning sycophants, who dare call themselves the cabinet, simply continue to ignore the public at large? What kind of security and protection do we have when this self-imposed dictator, along with his band of followers, continues to break the laws of the land? There is no protection in a law that the federal government ignores, Mr. Speaker. There is no protection in a law that the Solicitor General vows publicly that he will not obey, and there is no protection in a law that even the murderers know will never be applied as long as the present Minister of Justice and Solicitor General retain their cabinet posts.

The Solicitor General knew that the House had approved the law calling for the death penalty, on conviction for the murder of a policeman or prison guard, when he accepted his cabinet post, and so he accepted that high office with false credentials. He knew at the outset that he would not obey the laws that he swore to uphold as a condition of his office.

It is unthinkable and unacceptable to me and to others, Mr. Speaker, that a member of this House would accept a cabinet post, swear an oath to uphold the laws of our country, and then say out the other side of his mouth that he would resign if his cabinet colleagues forced him to carry out the laws of Canada respecting the application of the death penalty for capital murder.

His cabinet colleagues should have told the minister at that time that if he wanted the power and the prestige and the financial advantage of cabinet rank, then he should be prepared to accept the responsibilities that go with the rank, and follow the laws as set forth by parliament. In that respect, Mr. Speaker, on July 2, 1975, I rose in this House and moved a motion under Standing Order 43 in which I called upon the Solicitor General to resign from the cabinet and make way for a minister who would respect the laws as laid down by this parliament, and follow them accordingly. Of course there were the usual Liberal dissenters who do not attach any real importance to discussions on topics of interest to our people. I was not able to have the House adjourn to debate the question, but the question is under debate at this moment.

Member after member has asked for the minister's resignation, and it looks as though the only way we will get rid of him is for the Prime Minister to listen to the voices of the people and fire him. But we already know that the Prime Minister does not listen to any voice, and therefore such a proposition immediately becomes a hopeless one. But the weight of public opinion continues to be against the position being maintained by the government with respect to capital punishment. There cannot be the slightest doubt on that score.

This brings to mind another motion I moved in this House last year. Taking into account the intense feeling of the people of Canada, as evidenced by the tone of majority comment on this subject, this would be an appropriate time to repeat the words in my motion of June 9, 1975. I rose and moved, "That this Parliament instruct the Prime Minister to initiate a national referendum with regard to capital punishment." I pointed out that the government was obviously incapable of coping with the emotional issue

of capital punishment, and I suggested that the government was in fact asking the Canadian people to accept the present alarming rate of increase in violent crime as a way of life.

● (2010)

If we, as the elected representatives of all of the people, cannot come up with a reasonable solution in accordance with the wishes of the great majority of Canadians then there is no other way that this issue can be settled to the satisfaction of the people, and in the interests of peace and security, except by allowing the people of Canada to vote on the issue in a national referendum.

If the government cannot allow itself to be bound by the will of parliament, and if it cannot bring itself to the point of tabling legislation that it will abide by, then it should dissolve parliament, call a national general election, and place capital punishment on the ballot. We simply cannot continue year after year in a legislative vacuum where capital punishment is concerned. It cannot be kicked around year after year on an ad hoc basis as though it were a football, while violent crime continues to rise.

Many of my colleagues in this House have quoted statistics to support their cases, Mr. Speaker, both for and against capital punishment, and for myself I choose to believe that the statistics on violent crime in Canada since the cabinet effectively abolished the death penalty by commutation speak for themselves and point out the need for severe remedies. There are presently a number of murderers awaiting the death penalty.

One of these cases has been carried over from 1972, two from 1973, and two from 1974. Four have been carried over from 1975, and yet another involves a conviction on February 10 of this year. Eight of these people were convicted of murdering police officers, and two were convicted of murdering police officials. I am not even talking about the scores of murderers who have committed brutal crimes that did not fall into the category of murder of policemen and prison guards. According to the law as it stands today, these people were convicted of capital murder, and capital murder calls for the death penalty. I have no doubt that, even if this bill fails to pass and we have to fall back on the existing law, none of the people presently awaiting execution will in fact be executed. In fact in time they will be allowed to roam our streets at random only to commit crimes again and again, as has happened in the past.

I need only to mention Charles Manson as one example who will be released shortly, after having committed a multiple number of horrendous crimes, and in fact is threatening to continue to do likewise upon his release. But we do not have to single out Charles Manson alone—we have our own variety of Charles Mansons in Canada.

I have mentioned in my previous speeches on this subject that many people complain that capital punishment is cruel and inhumane punishment. Even if I accept that as valid, Mr. Speaker, I have to counter with the charge that it is far more cruel and inhumane for a person to roam the streets preying on innocent and helpless citizens. It is far more cruel to seek out a man or woman, or a small child, and murder that person for a few dollars, for sexual desires, or simply for kicks. What is more cruel than to lure a small girl, not even in her teens, away from home or