

Oral Questions

up 11 per cent, to tell the House when firm proposals to meet this problem of increasing crime can be laid before the House so that there can be a balance between reform, rehabilitation of the criminal and the protection of the person in a free society?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the goal we wish to pursue. We will have a measure to put before the House shortly. I cannot give the hon. member an exact date, but I hope to have an announcement soon.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, with an appreciation of the problems involved in this very sensitive area, can the minister assure the House that there will be no delay because of the involvement of inter-related measures which could help meet the crime situation now and/or the emotional debate that might ensue on capital punishment and that if there are measures to meet the crime situation now that they will be introduced and that capital punishment will be treated on its merits or demerits.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, there will be no delay of any measure in order to put it forward with a measure on capital punishment. On the contrary, we are trying to speed up some measures which might have taken longer so that we can do more to protect the Canadian people from crime.

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CRIMINAL CODE**POSSIBLE AMENDMENT OF ABORTION PROVISION—
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Last week the Committee of One Million presented a brief on abortion to the Prime Minister in connection with the presentation to Parliament this Thursday of a petition of one million names. I should like to ask the minister now if he has studied the brief and whether or not he is giving consideration to legislative action to restrict abortions to cases where the medical need is indisputable and to do this by specifying in legislation that the word "health" in section 251 of the Criminal Code is not to include social factors?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any indication that social factors, apart from those which have an impact upon health within the meaning of the section, are relevant in any case. I do not think the brief changes the essential position of the government which is that if the medical committees are willing to take the responsibility that was transferred to them in the 1969 law, we have a law which can be made to operate. There is no immediate intention therefore to present further legislation.

Mr. Roche: Mr. Speaker, in light of the escalation of abortions which now exceed 43,000 per year or 12.6 per cent of live births, I should like to ask the minister if the government is giving any consideration to guaranteeing protection of the child conceived but not yet born.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the position of the unborn child of course was at the base of the thinking which led to the particular law in 1969 and that form of protection for it. We are looking at the whole question of the operation of the abortion law and the steps which should be taken to make it work more effectively. There may be some announcement in due course about this, but as to the specific intention in respect of legislation my previous answer stands.

**SUGGESTED AMENDMENT TO MAKE APPLICATION OF
ABORTION PROVISION UNIFORM—PROPOSED REFERENCE TO
SUPREME COURT FOR INTERPRETATION OF WORD "HEALTH"**

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question along the same line. I might preface it by saying I agree with the position of the minister. There is a difference of opinion in the House on both sides relative to abortion. I should like to put this question to him because I believe it is very serious. In light of the fact that Morgentaler was convicted of certain acts and is now still being charged before the courts for acts which committees in other provinces are approving every day, does the minister not feel it is time the law was reviewed and changed so that the law is respected and made uniform throughout the country in this regard.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the law of course is uniform. A question does arise under the law concerning the place of, and the functioning of, the medical committee. That, of course, is another matter which depends upon the responsibility and the kind of action which is taken by authorities other than this parliament or this government.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, would the minister not consider taking this matter before the Supreme Court of Canada to obtain a judicial interpretation of the word "health" in the section with reference to abortion, what it means in relation to the mother and so on, so that the law will be applied uniformly across the country.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I am not convinced that an immediate reference to the Supreme Court is the best solution. I did indicate in my earlier answer to the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona that the question of the law and its operation is something we are looking at, and that we will be proposing certain steps in respect of its operation. As a result of the examination of this operation, I indicated there would be an announcement in the House in due course.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**REQUEST FOR REPORT ON ESCALATION OF PENSIONS OF
RETIRED EMPLOYEES**

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport may I direct my question to his parliamentary secretary. On Monday, May 12, as recorded at page 5689 of *Hansard*, when we were discussing the estimates of the Department of Transport, the minister said that on Monday, May 26,