

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

the present government, the Liberal party, which has put forward all our social legislation. That is fantastic. That is why I would be proud, as a Liberal, if my party and my government were to approve the measure proposed by the hon. member for York-Humber in order that we might at last think about the sad lot which befalls the victims of criminals or their families.

This is why the suggestion of the previous speaker, namely that this resolution or this bill should be deferred to the committee on justice and legal affairs is quite interesting and I would be pleased to support it in order that we may refrain from considering in that committee some legislation which always tends to ease the onus of the guilty, bills which are liable to improve the difficult situation which they have sometimes deserved. As I am anxious to let another of my colleagues, the member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman), whose comments will certainly be more interesting than mine, have the chance to express his views, I will close my remarks briefly.

However, may I point out to the member for York-Humber that there is legislation now in force in New Zealand on the compensation granted to the victims of criminals.

Knowing the member for York-Humber as an unequalled statistician, as a man who collects every imaginable or unimaginable newspaper clipping—he is a real book of knowledge—I was surprised to note that he did not mention the fact that there has been since 1963 legislation in New Zealand providing compensation for the victims or the families of the victims of criminals. I will turn over the papers to the member for York-Humber in a moment so that he may complete all the notes he has on the matter and I urge him to continue in the same vein and to speak with all his well-known eloquence so that this measure may be passed shortly.

I am in full agreement with him that the argument claiming that such legislation is exclusively within provincial jurisdiction is a false argument; I agree with him, but if the administration of justice is under provincial jurisdiction, let us then pass the bill which I submitted to the house last year.

Let the power to commute death sentences remain with the lieutenant governor in council and let us relieve the cabinet of this task, of this burden. Let us ask the lieutenant governor in council and the provincial authorities to administer justice completely and thoroughly and when the commutation

[Mr. Choquette.]

of death sentences is involved, it will be up to the provincial authorities to do it, because the same argument can be used which is put forward by those who would get rid of that responsibility and who say: This is strictly a provincial jurisdiction. If the administration of justice is an exclusively provincial responsibility, the same argument stands for those who say: Hand over capital punishment to the provinces; this no longer concerns the federal government. I would then suggest to the hon. member for York-Humber that he should reply to those who put forward that fallacious argument by using the argument I have suggested to him.

In closing, my remarks, I say that the most practical solution one can suggest is the creation of a federal-provincial fund. I feel the problem could be solved by establishing such a fund to compensate the victims of criminals. I am of the opinion that asking the provinces and the federal government to cooperate in setting up such a fund would constitute an appropriate and concrete solution to the problem.

● (5:50 p.m.)

[English]

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I support this motion. I find myself in agreement with the hon. member for York-Humber (Mr. Cowan) and to my amazement, with the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Choquette). That being so, surely, there must be unanimous agreement in this house about this matter.

The motion contains a useful suggestion and I think the house ought to pass it, so that the government may be informed that the will of parliament is that certain steps ought to be taken along these lines. That would not involve the government in any commitment other than to consider the expediency of introducing legislation for the creation of a criminal injuries compensation board. I have not heard a word against this proposal for the last two years and I think public opinion generally in the country would favour such a step. The jurisdictional problem could easily and quickly be overcome with the provinces. We are informing the government now that parliament as a whole favours action along the lines suggested in the motion. Consequently, we ought to pass the motion. If the government proceeds with the necessary legislation it can count on full support from this side of the house.