

Capital Punishment

● (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS--MOTIONS

[English]

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

SUGGESTED STUDY BY STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General be empowered to study and report on the arguments for and against capital punishment giving consideration to allowing the question of capital punishment to come to a free vote in the House.

He said: Mr. Speaker, to get right to the point, I should say that this is not one of my Bills to reinstate capital punishment for planned and deliberate premeditated acts of murder. It is a motion, which I call upon Parliament to endorse, which would allow a special standing committee of this House, namely, the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General, to review the pros and cons of capital punishment and then to bring that report forward to Parliament so that every Member of Parliament, regardless of political faith, would have an opportunity to hear the most up to date information available on both sides of this very controversial issue.

There is no question in my mind that we who support a return to capital punishment have a responsibility to those who do not. These people have been asking for an opportunity to come before a committee of Parliament in order to express their views. Organizations such as the United Council of Churches, the Catholic organizations, the John Howard Society, all those persons who in conscience feel that capital punishment is wrong, would like an opportunity to explain to the elected representatives why they feel that way. If this House denies the right of this motion to be passed, it will deny the right of those abolitionists to be heard.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Domm: I know it is not a conscience issue with the New Democratic Party. It does not have a conscience about capital punishment. Those Hon. Members vote as a Party against capital punishment because they have no freedom of choice. I am talking to the Liberals and the Conservatives now who treat this matter as a free vote, not to the socialists. I am not speaking to the New Democratic Party which knows what is best for Canada regardless of what the Canadian people want. It votes for abolition.

Mr. Riis: What about the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) of Canada?

Mr. Domm: The Prime Minister of Canada—**Mr. Blackburn (Brant):** What about your Cabinet?**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Order, please.**Mr. Domm:** I know this is a touchy issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes, and I know it is a touchy issue, but I hope Hon. Members, knowing this is Private Members' Business, will all please let us have a really fine Monday afternoon.

Mr. Domm: I have 10 minutes allotted to me to make my case. There is nothing the New Democratic Party would like better than to make it impossible for me to have my 10 minutes. Those Hon. Members have said in the Committee on Justice and Solicitor General that they will do anything they can to filibuster this issue so it cannot be heard. They are denying those who want abolition the right to appear before a parliamentary committee.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Domm: They are denying these people the right to appear before the Committee on Justice and Solicitor General. Their own Member, who sat on that committee, said it is not a matter of whether the issue is heard or not; it is that he does not wish it to be heard. He does not want to do anything. He wants to shove it under the desk. That is not a democratic system of government.

What we are dealing with today is the question of having the opportunity, if this motion passes, to hear both sides of the issue, both the noisy so called abolitionists over there, and the rest of us. But the New Democratic Party is denying the Canadian people the opportunity to put forward their views before a parliamentary committee because it fully intends to do everything within its power, not only to filibuster a return to capital punishment, because it is the Party's position, but to filibuster the rights of the abolitionists to be heard before a committee of Parliament in order that a decision be made about the pros and cons of the issue.

I have taken up five minutes, and the New Democratic Party has taken up two of those five minutes with their raucous noise. In the remaining five minutes, I would like to document statistics. Neither the Liberals nor the New Democrats have any idea about what is going on with statistics today. I am going to use the most recent report of *The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics* here in Ottawa, which was published on January 1. The Liberals denied to the Canadian people all through their terms in office the right to know what is happening in first degree homicides in Canada. I refer to the report put out by Statistics Canada last week which compares Canada with the United States. I would like to draw your attention to the highlights of this report.

Some Hon. Members: Go ahead.**Mr. Nystrom:** Read it.

Mr. Domm: If those Hon. Members will be quiet for a moment. If we take the trend, the graph, of first degree homicide in Canada since we abolished capital punishment, we will find that the homicide rate has gone up every year on first degree planned and deliberate murder, and gone down on second degree. In the United States, as compared to Canada, it