

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

CALL FOR STUDY BY STANDING COMMITTEE—MOTION UNDER
S.O. 43

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 43 on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. In a poll conducted recently in the riding of Peterborough, Ontario, 5,927 respondents answered the following question: "Do you support capital punishment for premeditated first degree murder?" Of these respondents, 5,168 or 87.2 per cent answered in the affirmative. Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton (Mr. Scott):

● (1415)

That this House urge the government to respond to Canadians and refer this subject of capital punishment to the all-party Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs for its recommendations to be made to Parliament, or follow the example of the Conservatives and pledge support for a free vote in this House on the subject of capital punishment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Does the House give unanimous consent to this motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—ALLEGED REPUDIATION OF
STATEMENT OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It goes to the heart of the parliamentary system and concerns the Solicitor General who on Friday, as a minister of the Crown and appearing as the Acting Minister of Justice, a position he holds by virtue of an order in council, gave an undertaking on behalf of the government which later, according to the Minister of Justice, "we decided, the Prime Minister and I, that we were not to accept".

Since the Prime Minister has repudiated the minister, has he asked for the resignation of that minister, or has that resignation been offered to the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, this House can not function if the word of hon. members can not be accepted. Particularly it can not function if we cannot accept the word of ministers with

Oral Questions

respect to bills which they are piloting through the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: By his answer the Prime Minister has indicated that the word of the Acting Minister of Justice in committee, on a bill he is piloting, is absolutely worthless. He has thrown aside the ability of this House and the public of Canada to trust the word of a minister.

My question to the Prime Minister is this. Since we have an energy bill before the House of Commons and in a committee, does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is piloting that bill through the committee, speak for the government, or will his word be repudiated by the Prime Minister? There are finance bills which are coming through. When they are in committee does the Minister of Finance speak for the government on those questions or will he be repudiated by the Prime Minister?

Some hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister has abandoned the traditional standards of this House.

Madam Speaker: I must ask the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, my question is: since the Prime Minister has abandoned the traditional standards on which this House has customarily relied, what new standards has he put in place in order to tell us which word of which minister in this House can be trusted and accepted?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, there are no new standards; the same standards continue to apply.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, if the same standards apply then the Solicitor General of Canada, as Acting Minister of Justice, should resign and have his resignation placed before the Prime Minister and this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: During the time in which the Acting Minister of Justice made the statement which has been repudiated by the Prime Minister, he was serving in that position by order in council, by the direct instruction of the Government of Canada, and he was flanked by the advisers of the Minister of Justice. I wonder whether the Prime Minister can tell us if everything else the Solicitor General said on that occasion was a mistake too. Was everything else he said to be distrusted and thrown aside? Has the Prime Minister repudiated everything the minister said? How does the House of Commons know what is repudiated and what is not?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is making an emotional argument about something which happens frequently.