

quential. Fifthly, and this is the strongest argument which the minister himself advanced in the miscellaneous estimates committee yesterday, the disposing of these potatoes would likely raise the market price.

Perhaps in a way the minister tipped his hand yesterday when he dealt with the question. He said he would not want to do that because that was not the purpose of the program at all; it was not to deal with price raises but to ensure the farmers of some kind of minimal return. If that is the only interest that the minister and the stabilization board have, surely that is not sufficient for the needs of the potato growers of Prince Edward Island. The minister continues to talk vaguely about export markets. What export markets? When? I know as sure as I stand here that two or three weeks from now when the minister makes a decision it will be the same as it could be today, and that is to divert these 600 or 700 carloads of potatoes for badly needed stock feeding.

I cannot understand, nor can anyone in Prince Edward Island, why in the first instance the minister does not reply and meet with the individuals directly involved and, secondly, explore the matter in the most direct way possible.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of very serious inaccuracies in what the hon. member has said, and in the three minutes allotted to me I want to point them out as clearly as I can. In the first place, the purchase program was, if you like, indeed a cash advance of 75 cents per hundredweight with a further 75 cents available to the producer when he was called upon to deliver the potatoes. The fact is that today those potatoes are selling anywhere from 30 cents to 50 cents per hundredweight over the \$1.50 we guaranteed.

If we call them forward from the producers and call them at \$1.50, where is the justice in that to the individual farmer when there is a rapidly escalating market at the moment where he may want to sell them? He could then refund the cash advance we have made and take advantage of the price higher than \$1.50 per hundredweight. The hon. member seems to completely ignore the case of farmers who have taken this cash advance and who may have an opportunity, which is manifest right today, of probably getting another 30 cents to 50 cents.

If we were to call for delivery of the potatoes today, which we have a right to do, and pay him the other 75 cents he would only get \$1.50. When the market is escalating as it is and he wants to give back to us the interest free cash advance, then he can avail himself of the market which is higher. There is justice involved in that.

If we were to divert these potatoes to livestock feed, whose potatoes would we call? We would have to call them from individual farmers, and this is nonsense. Are we going to deny them the right to avail themselves of the higher price? I do not think that we are, or that we ought to. I think the hon. member should take this into account. He complains that there are no reefer cars. I checked today and I know there is a shortage, but at the same time there has been a reasonably good movement of potatoes compared with this time of the year in other years. So it is not fair to say that is the whole reason.

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We introduced this program for the purpose of raising the price at least above \$1.50 because each producer knew he could get that much from us. We tried to make it clear, in spite of their attempt to cloud the issue, that if the farmer could avail himself of a price in the market higher than \$1.50, that opportunity would be open to him. I intend to see that the individual farmer has that opportunity.

• (2220)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE—ABOLITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT—REVIEW BY HOUSE DURING PRESENT SESSION

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday March 14 last, I put the following question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau):

In view of the fact that on December 29, 1967 the House of Commons deemed advisable to amend section 202A(2) of the Criminal Code, dealing with capital punishment in Canada, with a few exceptions, made the amendment to remain in force for a five-year period ending on December 29, 1972, can the right hon. Prime Minister tell the House whether he intends to have the House deal with the matter this year, during the present session?

The Prime Minister answered that he did not intend to broach this matter during the present session.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the question should be submitted to the House as soon as possible. A few months ago, I sent to the 18,000 family heads of my constituency a questionnaire in which I asked them to state their opinion on that controversial issue. I received 4,752 answers. Therefore, over 25 per 100 of the citizens of my constituency took pains to send me their answer in Ottawa. As you undoubtedly realize, that percentage is quite significant and shows that this problem concerns my constituents as does any other event in French Canada.

Of all respondents, 322 stated that they thought it better to leave the law unchanged and 4,250 asked that the legislation be amended and that the death penalty be restored. Hence, roughly speaking, 92.6 per cent of the people in my constituency want the restoration of capital punishment. Moreover, the results of a poll conducted by the Canadian Press among federal members of Parliament indicated that 77 per cent of the people's representatives wish to revert to the wording of the 1967 Act.

Mr. Speaker, so as to enlighten hon. members' memory, I should like to call their attention briefly on a few changes brought to the legislation since 1961. In 1961, murder was considered as capital in all instances and the permissible verdict was capital punishment in all cases if the judge so decided.

In September 1961, murders were differentiated in two very distinct categories. First, capital murder could entail capital punishment and was defined as premeditated murder or the murder of a police officer, a prison guard or any other law officer. In addition, murder committed during the perpetration of another criminal act entailed the possible application of the same verdict.

The second category was that of non-capital murder, which entailed a possible sentence of life imprisonment. All other murders were classified in this category.