

Emergency Powers Act

the house at the present time. Therefore I think there is no question but that it is a subject that we can discuss on a strictly non-partisan basis and therefore entirely on its merits.

From my reading on the subject, which has not been in recent days, apparently we in Canada have not paid as much attention to it as has been paid in some of the older countries. I can understand that because the objection to certain processes of law, particularly to capital punishment, in my opinion increases with the development of civilization. The older a civilization becomes the more people begin to examine the various legal processes. I understand the subject has been discussed in Great Britain on many occasions and received such wide support that the House of Commons of that country passed a bill in 1948 providing for the suspension of capital punishment for a period of 20 years. That bill, however, did not become law because it was defeated by the House of Lords.

Canadian experience has not been as lengthy as that of Great Britain and western European countries, particularly those to which the hon. member for Moose Jaw referred. As far as I can ascertain the first reference to this subject in the debates of the house was made in 1914 by Mr. Bickerdike, who introduced legislation quite similar to that introduced by the hon. member for Moose Jaw this afternoon. I understand he reintroduced his bill in 1917 and received the support of Hon. George Graham, at one time a cabinet minister. In 1919 Mr. Mowat introduced legislation containing a similar proposal to that contained in the bill of the hon. member for Moose Jaw. Then in 1923 a bill was introduced by Mr. William Irvine, a former member of the house for a number of years who has been and still is a very active member of the C.C.F. party in Canada.

I think a reading of the debates of that period will indicate that Mr. Irvine had given the subject considerable study, and he made a most interesting speech at that time. In 1937 a parliamentary committee gave attention to the subject, dealing with the methods of execution and other matters. Since that time various organizations, church and other organizations, small groups of the different political parties and many newspapers throughout Canada have dealt with the subject from time to time, and the newspapers have published editorials. Possibly the most notable and recent are the editorials published in the *Vancouver Sun*, which is so ably represented in Ottawa by a descendant

of a very well known and prominent newspaper man. The *Ottawa Citizen*, I presume because of the introduction of the bill by the hon. member for Moose Jaw, had an editorial on February 10 entitled "Stale Arguments for Hanging" which I think is well worth reading, but I do not intend to read it at this time.

The *Citizen* complimented the hon. member for Moose Jaw for bringing the subject to the attention of the house and indicated that it was about time there was some action to improve the present law. I am of the opinion that it would be advisable to refer the bill to the committee revising the Criminal Code. That committee could study the terms of the bill, hear evidence and representations and make a report to the house.

I am not quite certain that I agree entirely with the proposal of the hon. member for Moose Jaw, that capital punishment should be limited to treason only. I am of the opinion that possibly we should have capital punishment for crimes of violence committed with cruelty and in cold blood.

On motion of Mr. Herridge the debate was adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: When the house reconvenes at eight o'clock it will continue consideration of the business in committee of the whole which was interrupted at five o'clock.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

EMERGENCY POWERS ACT

PROVISION FOR CONTINUATION OF ACT FROM MAY 31, 1953 TO MAY 31, 1954

The house resumed consideration in committee of the following resolution—Mr. St. Laurent—Mr. Robinson in the chair:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Emergency Powers Act to provide for the continuation of the act for a further period of one year, that is from the thirty-first day of May, 1953, to the thirty-first day of May, 1954.

Mr. Churchill: I have become interested in this particular debate because of one or two statements made by the Minister of Justice. In view of the importance of the subject matter I feel it is worth while having a word or two to say. I take it that is the duty of the opposition when contentious legislation is before the house. In that connection I should like to quote from the book "Cabinet Government" by Jennings, page 464. This