

*Capital Punishment***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REINSTATEMENT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski:

That this House supports, in principle, the reinstatement of capital punishment and directs that a special committee on reinstatement, composed of 15 members, be established, hold hearings and make its final report to the House no later than three (3) months following the adoption of this motion, such report to provide recommendations on:

(a) which offence or offences should carry the death penalty, and in what circumstances;

(b) which method or methods should be used to carry out the penalty of death, and in what circumstances;

That, pursuant to Standing Order 107(1), this special committee be hereby appointed as a committee to prepare and bring in a bill no later than three months following the adoption of this motion, founded on the committee's recommendations on (a) and (b) above; such a bill shall be the object of a separate and distinct report of the special committee, and such a report shall be its final report;

That such bill, when reported from such special committee to the House, be deemed pursuant to Standing Order 107(1) to have been introduced and stand on the Order Paper, in the name of the special committee chairman, for first reading at the next sitting of the House; and that subsequent House stages of the bill be considered under "Government Orders", with the bill standing under the heading "Government Business"; and that, when the said bill has been read a second time, it shall stand referred to a Legislative Committee;

That the Striking Committee be empowered to name the Members of the special committee, provided that once the Striking Committee report is laid upon the Table, it shall be deemed concurred in;

That the special committee have the power to sit while the House is sitting and during periods when the House stands adjourned;

That the special committee be empowered to report from time to time and send for persons and papers, and to print such papers and evidence from time to time as may be ordered by the committee and to retain the services of expert, technical, professional and clerical staff;

That the special committee be empowered to adjourn from place to place inside Canada and that, when deemed necessary, the appropriate staff accompany the committee;

That a quorum of the special committee be eight (8) members for any vote, resolution or other decision; and that the chairman be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof whenever six (6) members are present;

That any substitution of membership on the special committee be made pursuant to Standing Order 94(4); and

That, notwithstanding the usual practices of this House, if the House is not sitting when the special committee is ready to issue its final report and the said bill, the special committee shall present its report and the bill to the House by filing them with the Clerk of the House provided that the report shall then be deemed to have been laid upon the Table, and the bill shall then be deemed, pursuant to Standing Order 107(1), to have been introduced at the first sitting of the House thereafter and to stand on the Order Paper in the name of the special committee chairman, for first reading at the next sitting of the House; and that subsequent House stages of the bill be considered under "Government Orders", with the bill standing under the heading "Government Business".

And on the amendment of Mr. Nystrom (p. 7307).

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, before Question Period I had the opportunity to

present what I hoped would be a case, not only for continuing debate on this issue but for ensuring that the large number of Canadians who are troubled by this issue would see the choices and options they have for coming to grips with this matter of violence in our society.

I want to spend the few minutes remaining addressing an issue which may trouble all Members of Parliament, as it does myself, and that is the responsibility Members of Parliament have in debate. I have heard other Members say that they have conducted public opinion polls in their riding and are, therefore, compelled to vote as those public opinion polls dictate. I believe that is an abdication of the role and responsibility of a Member of Parliament.

We recognize that while there is unquestionably an important responsibility to have dialogue, to consult, and to engage in the most active of exchange with one's constituents, there is certainly nothing in the traditions of Parliament which says that we must act as delegates of our constituents. We are, rather, representatives.

I find that argument troubling because it assumes that on certain preferred issues the role of a Member of Parliament is nothing more than a computer or video screen which records the instantaneous photograph of opinion as it may be. There is no responsibility for leadership, direction, or to try to open up to public purview the issues and elaborations of them which must necessarily be brought about.

There is a curious logic at work which says that we should accept statements of Members of the House who advocate capital punishment simply because they reflect public opinion. If that is the belief of members of the Conservative Party, I suggest that they should respond to Canadian public opinion, 75 per cent of which wants to get rid of the Government.

I presume Conservative Members are not ready to initiate that particular voluntary form of resignation. They say that over time they will change public opinion, over time they will show Canadians that they know what they are doing. However, with regard to capital punishment they say that they cannot do that. They deny that logic. They reject that position saying that they must respond to public opinion.

I do not think public opinion is overwhelmingly one-sided on this issue. I am receiving a large volume of correspondence in my constituency which is approximately two-thirds against capital punishment based upon reason. In the few minutes I have remaining I would like to cite some examples for Members to take into account.

In some ways the correspondence which has impressed me most is that which I received from a group of twelve year olds in grade 6 at the Brock-Corydon School in the French immersion program. I received 50 or 60 letters from those young people. Reading their letters makes me understand that capital punishment is a fundamental issue for them because it demonstrates to them what society might represent to them. Overwhelmingly they tell me to vote against it, that they do