

Stevens) indicated, that this is a debating House and that we can reflect, subject to the use of abusive language, upon the motives or anything else of the debating member although we cannot, as the rules say, reflect upon any vote of the House of Commons, which is a quite different thing.

I have listened to what has been said and I would not enter into this discussion if I thought anything improper had been imputed to the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia). I would not get into this question except, perhaps, to go to the defence of the hon. member for Davenport. Nothing has been said about the vote of the House of Commons, however, but only what may, correctly or incorrectly, have moved the hon. member for Davenport. I respectfully suggest that the hon. member ought not to be so sensitive, but should get on with the business before this House so that he will have an opportunity, for whatever motive he might have, to cast whatever vote he wants with respect to this particular bill.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the principle that is being advanced by the House leader of the official opposition has not been ruled upon by the Chair. The proposition of the opposition House leader ought not to be left unchallenged, although at this time I do not think the matter should be decided by the Chair because it is not before you, Mr. Speaker.

The point is that Standing Order 35 applies only to reflections upon the vote of the whole House. That, to my mind, is not the proper interpretation of that particular Standing Order. It is improper to reflect upon the vote of the House or upon any member within this House. To impute motives on the way an individual member casts his vote, or what those motives may have been, is not acceptable.

I fully agree with you, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) was treading a very thin line when he indicated that the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) was toeing the party line on this particular issue. I say that on two bases. If there is one independent member in this House, it is the hon. member for Davenport. Mr. Speaker, if the comment was made about the intervention of the hon. member for Davenport that he may have been espousing certain arguments in his remarks that were espoused by the leader of his party and espoused and advocated by me, that may have been the interpretation of the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens).

Having said that, I am sure the hon. member for York-Simcoe would not impute motives to the hon. member for Davenport on the way he cast his vote at any stage of the debate on Bill C-84.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on this point of order. If I interpret correctly what the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) said, it was that he had no ambition. If he has no ambition, I think it is only fair that he make his constituents aware of that. I am sure they would like to know what kind of member represents them in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I believe we are getting into discussion and debate. I suggest we return to Bill C-84.

Capital Punishment

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, to continue with my remarks on Bill C-84, I should like to touch on ten separate points which I feel are relevant before we come to the end of this important debate. One of my colleagues to the left suggested, "Keep politics out of the House of Commons". Mr. Speaker, certainly I am the last to introduce politics as far as debate is concerned on a matter as important as this question of retaining or not retaining the death penalty.

I wish to put a very basic question to hon. members. Is the retention of the death penalty in fact a deterrent? I believe most members would say it is a deterrent, as far as they personally are concerned, if there were any question of their committing a crime that might result in the loss of somebody's life or a crime that would be punishable by death. Certainly it would be a deterrent to me, and I believe most other members would say it would be a deterrent to them. The simple premise is that, if convicted, they might lose their own life. Surely in that case few could argue there is no deterrent.

There is considerable evidence, based on the statistics supplied by the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), gathered over the last 16 to 18 years, which would indicate that the death penalty may be a deterrent. I say that bearing in mind that for the six-year period ended in 1962 we found that the murder rate in Canada was approximately one per 100,000 people and it has gone up steadily since. Is it simply a coincidence that since 1962 the death penalty has not been imposed? Is it just coincidence that by 1974 the rate was 2.4 per 100,000? I think that says that perhaps the death penalty was a deterrent, and I think we have to face their reading of this bill with the assumption that in all likelihood the death penalty is a deterrent.

When we reach our decision on how to vote tomorrow, we should recognize to a greater extent than we have to date that public opinion in Canada favours the death penalty. Many estimates have been made on the degree of acceptance. I would say that in my area 75 per cent, or maybe 85 per cent, of the people would answer "Yes" if asked the simple question: Do you think the death penalty should be retained for at least some crimes? I hear my socialist friends to the left saying, "No." If they are so sure my figures are incorrect, then let us have a plebiscite. Let us find out in an accurate way, preferably at the next general election, whether Canadians feel the death penalty should be retained or not.

I find it interesting that the more you see this Liberal-Socialist alliance, the more you see the Solicitor General proposing a bill in effect seconded by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) as this one is, the more you can sense that there is nobody in this country so intolerant of public will—if public will happens to be against their views—than the Liberal-Socialists we have in this House. That is the simplest interpretation one can make of the fact that the government, aided and abetted by its Socialist friends to my left, has, by bringing forward this legislation, ignored the public will. If they do not believe that between 75 per cent and 85 per cent of Canadians favour retention of the death penalty, why can we not find out? Let us consult the public. Is there anything wrong with consulting the people, in a democracy, to learn if they think we should pass legislation abolishing the death penalty?