

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

penalty, but I am convinced that since the last vote on that question nothing has happened to make me change the views I expressed here in March 1966 and it is not the change in the bill which will have any bearing on them.

The statistics quoted on both sides about the crime rate after and before the abolition of the death penalty in some countries or states do not impress me much because they can be interpreted in various ways and there are too many differences between one country and another, one period and another, to reach safe and valid conclusions.

The abolishment of capital punishment is also premature, because we are far from having reached the stage where we can do without it. Our organizations for crime prevention, our system for the rehabilitation of criminals, and our social classes still need some considerable improvement before it can be considered. In this connection, I especially hope that the methods for the imprisonment of younger delinquents, who are often placed with hardened criminals, will be improved. In the matter of rehabilitation, we must specially think about them, because we should look after them when they can still become useful citizens.

Mr. Speaker, before concluding and in order not to repeat the arguments already raised, I consider that this penalty, which moreover could be the electric chair as well as the gas chamber, etc., is not a brutal nor a vengeful act, but solely tends to prevent the culprit from repeating the same crime, or others from doing the same and it is particularly aimed at enabling the community to do its duty, protect the life of its deserving citizens and finally to provide for its own security.

[English]

**Mr. L. R. Sherman (Winnipeg South):** Mr. Speaker, my position on the subject of capital punishment is known in this chamber. I disclosed it some 19 months ago when members of the house first had the opportunity to debate and vote upon this urgent social question. At that time, sir, as the record will show, I stood for abolition of the death penalty. That is the position, sir, for which I still stand, and I deeply regret that the members of the house have not been given the opportunity again to weigh this question in its full ramifications in their hearts, and to express their honest opinions on it in its full ramifications, freely and openly.

I am keenly disappointed that the bill now placed before us by the government does not go as far as it should. It is only a part way measure, retraining the death penalty for those who kill policemen or prison guards, and abolishing it in other categories of murder, for a five year trial period only.

I offer these remarks with no reflection intended on the hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell). I believe that he has waged a sincere and conscientious battle for a long time to achieve abolition in this country, and I believe he has been hamstrung by his colleagues to the extent that expresses and manifests itself in this part-way bill, this part measure, this compromise piece of legislation that we have before us today, which I am certain does not satisfy the Solicitor General any more than it satisfies me. My criticism, sir, is not directed toward him; it is directed to the government in general.

I suggest that the members of the government have ignored their responsibilities, as few governments in our time have ignored responsibilities on so pressing and compelling a question as this. For four years the members of the government have flouted the law of the land. They have lacked the courage to resolve the problem. They have lacked the spine to show any leadership in this area, and now they have put an abolitionist like me, sir, in an almost impossible position by trying to use me in this confrontation to get themselves out of trouble.

For four years we have had *de facto* abolition, because of a spineless government. For four years they have flouted the law of this land. Now they want to take the consciences and the sincere principles of every abolitionist in this chamber and twist them and use them to their own advantage, merely to achieve justification and vindication for what they have been doing, and for what they have not had the courage to do. In my opinion this is four years of despicable hypocrisy, and now we come to the greatest hypocrisy of them all, a so-called free vote on capital punishment.

I submit that this is not a legitimate free vote, because the universal ramifications of the question, and the implications of the question, are not involved in the issue on which we are voting. The principles at stake here are principles with which and in which there is no honest compromise. Why should there not be a bill on the subject before this chamber, sponsored by representatives of all parties, so that there would be a true, legitimate, free vote on the government side of the