

Capital Punishment

was a bit worried. However, I have rechecked the wording and I hope there is no legal technicality which will make it difficult to live with. The principle is good, so we will accept motion No. 36.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion No. 36 (Mr. Stevens) agreed to.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General) moved that Bill C-84, to amend the Criminal Code in relation to the punishment for murder and certain other serious offences, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): When shall the bill be read the third time?

Some hon. Members: Now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): By unanimous consent, now?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Allmand moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

SUMMER RECESS

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Before the debate on third reading begins, I understand that there has been further consideration of the motion I put forward this morning and I would like to repeat my request for unanimous consent to put the motion. I hesitate to read it all again because it is a very long motion. It is on the record, and I hope I can dispense with reading it again. However, I seek unanimous consent to introduce it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Does the House give the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) unanimous consent to introduce his motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion (Mr. Sharp) agreed to.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

MEASURES RESPECTING PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER AND OTHER SERIOUS OFFENCES

The House resumed consideration of Mr. Allmand that Bill C-84, to amend the Criminal Code in relation to the punishment for murder and certain other serious offences, be read the third time and do pass.

[Mr. Allmand.]

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I assume we are now on the third reading debate of the bill. Quite frankly, I think at this hour on a Friday afternoon, in spite of the fact that perhaps they should be here, there are several hon. members who would like to have an opportunity to speak on third reading but who are not present this afternoon. While it is fine for those of us who are here to think that that is too bad and that perhaps they should be present, they are not present. If I may say so, I think the House leaders would be quite ill-advised to try to push the final stage of this bill through the House this afternoon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lawrence: I believe some hon. members who have left Ottawa for their constituencies left in the belief that some time on Monday or Tuesday there would still be an opportunity for them to enter into some sort of meaningful debate on the third reading stage of the bill. Therefore, I hope there is no intention this afternoon to close off the third reading debate.

On that assumption, I would like to say a few words about the actions and attitude of the government in the last few years with respect to the whole field of law and order, crime and punishment and the administration of criminal law in this country. The third reading debate gives one an opportunity to do exactly that. First, I think it is a betrayal of the integrity and the moral honesty of this government that the whole subject of Bill C-84 came before the House this session.

An undertaking was seriously given—and for those of us who are retentionists it was seriously accepted over two years ago—that there would be a five or six-year period before we would be plunged once more into the emotional chaos and confusion which we have all gone through in the last three or four weeks. I think all of us have to look at the reasons or, as I am firmly convinced, the one and only reason we have gone through this heartrending and mind wrenching experience of the last few weeks in this House once more on this very emotional subject of capital punishment. It is simply this. If the full period of time is to run, as the undertaking given in 1973 indicated, then the next time this House and this country will debate this emotional issue will be during or just before a general election. I am firmly convinced—and I am led to believe that I am not the only one in this House or across the country to think so—that the sole reason the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) brought this matter to the fore is that they were afraid to face public opinion of this country when approaching a general election. There is no other reason.

● (1440)

An hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not know whether “yellow-bellied, mealy-mouthed politicians” is a parliamentary expression; I suspect it is not, and therefore I am not going to use it in relation to this government. I merely say to you, Mr. Speaker, I am not only disappointed, I not only feel betrayed by the actions of my government, but I am sure my feelings in this regard are shared by countless thousands across this country. I do mean thousands. I do not