

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

The other aside I wish to make is to stress, along with all members of this house, my great respect for the personal integrity of the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) and the strong impression he created by his intervention the other day.

After this, Mr. Speaker, I should like to take the privilege, like all other members, to state frankly and quite openly, what this free discussion enables us to say even though in my case, being independent, discussion is always free. I may be more explicit and slightly more violent this afternoon. Some hon. members said that feelings should not be involved in our interventions and yet, having listened to all the speeches, I did not see many who did not plead their case with a feeling shared by the whole house.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after this, I shall categorically oppose this bill and I will vote against it for two reasons. First, my electors were categorical. I had a questionnaire distributed in my riding and 95 per cent of the people answered that they were in favour of retaining capital punishment in cases of capital murders proven beyond any doubt. The second reason why I shall oppose this bill, Mr. Speaker, is because of the obvious and numerous defects that it contains.

I was even surprised to see that the hon. Solicitor General of Canada, who is an upright man and everybody's friend, was chosen to submit this bill to the house, which bill I find, for certain reasons, unacceptable and scandalous. It was even called a compromise, and this is true; it is a kind of subterfuge to impress the members and to obtain a majority vote which will run counter to the general feeling of parliament as was expressed last year.

Mr. Speaker, I even think that this bill brings discredit on the government.

I am one of those who have heard it said several times—and again, recently, by the hon. member for York-Humber, who quoted many instances in support of his argument—that the government gave indications of being vacillating, of lacking in firmness, of being compelled to make all kinds of compromises to rule the country, to such an extent that throughout the land, editorial writers and the man in the street doubt that it possesses these steadfast qualities

[Mr. Mongrain.]

required by governments to show that kind of leadership which is required at this time.

I think that this bill is a case in point that the government hems and haws, fails to accept its responsibilities and has to resort to subterfuges so that its proposed legislation is enacted by parliament, while being aware that most members of parliament, as well as the majority of the Canadian people, are against it.

When I see a government use subterfuge to obtain the good will of parliament, I am led to question this respect towards our parliamentary institutions which are several hundred years old, towards our parliament which is supposed to be sovereign and to express the will of the people.

The bill is unacceptable and I submit as proof the very arguments advanced in support of the bill. In my opinion, these arguments are questionable. For instance, false figures have been quoted, distorting the truth. I should like to give an example—I do not have time to give more than one—taken from an editorial published in the November 13 issue of the *Ottawa Citizen* under the title:

Does hanging deter? Abolition foes must offer proof.

Here is the last paragraph:

[*English*]

—But the Solicitor General produced heartening figures: 45 prisoners whose death sentences were commuted were released on parole between 1957 and 1965. Forty are now living useful lives. Five had their parole revoked but not for murder offences.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, these releases on parole were authorized at a time when people were hanged on circumstantial evidence. I submit that those figures do not reflect the truth. Now people are hanged because they are found guilty of capital murder beyond any suspicion, for which proof has been made beyond any reasonable doubt. Therefore, that is not the case any more, and figures do not reflect the truth; furthermore, the same devices were used in many other cases. Arguments as misleading were advanced, for instance, when someone recalled the tortures of the middle ages, when people were quartered, scalded, or amputated of their ears, their fingers and their feet, and all that.