

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my Party, I want to say as well that because of the fact that 82 Members of Parliament have yet to have an opportunity to speak on this issue, we certainly would like to at least take advantage of the one hour extension.

Mr. Domm: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order raised by the spokesman for the Official Opposition. I would like to point out that opportunity was given to his Party when it turned down the opportunity to sit all weekend and speak.

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, I am not clear whether consent was given to sit during the lunch hour or not.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair took it that there was consent. There were some points of order following in order for Members to make their positions clear, but I took it as consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REINSTATEMENT

The House resumed from Thursday, June 25, 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;

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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)

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, the question of capital punishment has been a very difficult one for me these past few weeks. I am, as you can see, Sir, speaking near the end of the debate. I followed very closely the comments made on both sides of the subject before making up my mind.

As you know, Sir, this is the first of two possible questions which will be put before Parliament. The first is whether this House will support capital punishment in principle. If the resolution is passed, the second question would ask Parliament to consider specific amendments to the Criminal Code. Both are intended to be free votes, that is, those votes on which a Member can follow his own conscience. With that I agree.

During the election campaign of 1984 I indicated to the voters of Niagara Falls that the Progressive Conservative Party was committed to a free vote in the House of Commons on this subject. I thought it was a good idea then and I still do. At the time I indicated to the voters of Niagara Falls that I would vote in favour of capital punishment. It was not an easy decision to make then and it certainly has become more difficult as we approach the time of vote.

I would like to say a few words about the preliminary issues concerning this topic. Something which has been discussed many times in Parliament and in the media is the responsibility of the Member of Parliament on difficult subjects such as this. There are those who say that a Member of Parliament should in most cases reflect the views of his constituents. On the other side, many would argue that a Member of Parliament should always follow his own conscience even if his views differ from those of his constituents.

I do not believe that the role of a Member of Parliament is as clear cut as those two options would seem to indicate. I think every Member of Parliament has a duty to do whatever he can to seek out the opinions of his constituents so that he can be as fully informed on a particular subject as possible.