

opposite very upset. I do not want to make them upset. I simply want to put this proposition: a motion, an idea, or a bill of this importance ought to be presented by the government. It ought to have the moral commitment of the Prime Minister attached to the debate which goes on concerning that bill. I, for one, will contribute every minute I can to stop this motion from going to committee. I will do the same on any other bill or motion, until such time as the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada steps into the House and gives his opinion openly, or, in his words, "comes clean". It is about time he does so on this issue.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, I too should like to have this motion or a similar bill brought forward by the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark). I think the example set by the previous government in this instance was the right one. It allowed the bill to pass in 1976.

I hope the Prime Minister will, particularly since he is well-known and respected as an abolitionist, stop this practice of having dozens of motions coming forward, and instead bring forward a bill himself, if he feels that we have now reached a point where we should no longer have the bill that was passed in 1976. I do not think the Prime Minister believes that we should change it. I have heard him say many times that he does not believe in the death penalty. Also I have heard him say that since the act, which the hon. member wants to reverse today, was passed only in 1976, there should be further time before one starts changing it again.

This matter is so important, as I am sure the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) will agree, it is not something which should be changed or amended every year or every six months. It is something I think most hon. members feel that we should stay with for a period of at least five years. I remember the Prime Minister saying that, and for that reason I would doubt very much that the Prime Minister would introduce a bill comparable to the one we are discussing today.

● (1630)

I, too, like the hon. member for Lachine (Mr. Blaker), am a little disturbed that despite his own strongly held views, views that have been shared by every prime minister of the country, that is, the abolitionist view, the Prime Minister would not exercise more leadership with his own members. I do not mean that they have to be sheep. I do not believe in that. He could exercise more leadership with his own members by suggesting that we do not re-examine this question only three years after it was thoroughly examined. Perhaps in another two or three years it might be appropriate to do so. I feel that is his wish, but it would have required not only a strong conviction, but a willingness on his part to lead his own party in that direction.

The position I take is in opposition to this bill. I took that position throughout the election campaign. We had many debates in New Westminster and Coquitlam on the advisability

or otherwise of restoring the death penalty. The member who introduced the motion today has said that the death penalty is in fact a deterrent, and he quoted William Taft who, I think, lived about 100 years ago. It is possible it was a deterrent when William Taft lived, but how the hon. member can go on saying it is a deterrent when we have the data for the last three years which show that the incidence of murder on a per capita basis has dropped, I do not know.

I am baffled when he criticizes us for saying that the death penalty is not a deterrent, and then turns around and says it is, but presents nothing to back up his statement. At least we try to back up our statements with fact, as we have done when we suggest it is not a deterrent. Certainly I have always tried to do that, and I did so during the election campaign. That is the fact as indicated by the statistics in the past three years. Those statistics were published during the last election campaign by the department of the solicitor general.

I am led to believe that the real reason for wanting to reintroduce the death penalty is not that the hon. member and others who want it reintroduced think it is a deterrent. Nor is it because they think it will remove some of the crime from our streets. The hon. member mentioned all kinds of things, very serious offences, indeed, that had nothing at all to do with murder.

Bringing back the death penalty for murder will not address some of the very serious problems that we all agree exist today in Canadian society, although not nearly as serious as in some other societies which have the death penalty. The problems we have in our cities bear no relationship, in my view, to the existence or otherwise of the death penalty. The only ground which I can find upon which he advocates the return of the death penalty is basically one of revenge, or the eye for an eye argument. If someone does commit murder he should in turn be murdered. It is not really because it is a deterrent that he wants it back, but because he feels, and I trust genuinely and honestly, that if someone murders he, in turn, should suffer the death penalty. That is a fundamental principle of revenge which I do not think has any place in our society. I have never felt it had any place in our society or in any society that prides itself on having achieved some measure of growth and civilization.

The death penalty does not bring back the dead person. One might perhaps even consider, if it did so, there would be a point in having the death penalty. It does not help the friends and relatives of the victim, those persons for whom we all have concern. The death penalty does not help them. It seems to me that the hon. member and others who favour it are only looking at the principle of retribution.

Another matter that bothers me is that in Canada, at any rate, when we did have the death penalty, sentences were commuted on every occasion subsequent to December, 1961. The hon. member mentioned that a policeman in his constituency was murdered some ten years ago. He said that because there was no death penalty on the books that murderer did not suffer the death penalty. I would remind him that the murderer would very likely not have suffered the death penalty in any