

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

abolition of capital punishment because that has been the law of the land *de facto* if not *de jure*. I would have liked to use stronger language against the government this afternoon. Any opposition would be justified in using stronger language with regard to the government ignoring a parliamentary decision if the subject matter were any other than the highly emotional and controversial one we are faced with now. One can talk about capital punishment and arouse all kinds of emotions because we all know that the greatest civil right one can protect is the right of a human being to live.

This government is asking the same members of the same parliament, under the same circumstances, to legalize its actions, Mr. Speaker. This is what they are asking. This government asked the same members, the same parliament, 18 months ago to make the same decision. The members of parliament debated and then decided. The government is placing a club over the heads of every member of parliament, whether that member is a supporter of the government or a member of the opposition. It is government duress and cabinet government all powerful, and quite often it is cabinet judiciary. This government has been the judge and jury.

I want to pause there. I come back to the bill. There is no person, particularly defence counsel, who does not appreciate what goes on in the cabinet. Under the Criminal Code they have the legal right and duty to review the whole of the evidence, the decision of the court and the decision of the jury in order to decide whether the sentence should be commuted from one of death to life imprisonment. This is a difficult situation. I can understand the minister's deep emotion the last time the vote was taken because juries, lawyers and judges experience the same emotion.

● (4:20 p.m.)

This question is now back for debate, and it comes so soon that parliament demands an explanation. Yesterday I read in the *Globe and Mail* an article which impressed me. I thought it was well written, well prepared, well documented and well thought out. It indicated that decay has set in in the government, and that the decay goes deep. It has moved from the pulp of the tooth to the root. In such circumstances, Mr. Speaker, the dentist removes the tooth.

Mr. Mackasey: He cuts your head off.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Mr. Woolliams: Where is the government's priority list? Somebody said "he cuts your head off". I do not know where the hon. member stands on the issue, Mr. Speaker, but I am not talking lightly about it. This is a very serious matter. I ask the government where their priority list is. We are now debating this matter again having spent several weeks debating it during the last 18 months.

Where is the program that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) speaks of with great pride while government ministers go on spending to combat the obvious and admitted financial debacle that is facing the nation? Where is their program for dealing with high interest rates? Where is their program to arrest the high cost of living? Where is their program to eliminate high government spending, high unemployment, and lay-offs? Where is their program with reference to the large losses sustained in the wheat market and in the coal market? Where is their assistance to industry fighting for survival in the absence of any clear-cut terms of reference for the Kennedy round talks?

These questions are relevant in light of today's situation. There is anarchy in freight rates. We talk of boom, Mr. Speaker. We talk of sympathy. I ask the minister to go into the homes in any city in Canada today where 25 per cent of the people are living below an acceptable standard. While apparent deterioration of the Canadian economy is taking place, this government asks parliament to make *de jure* what they have already made *de facto*.

If the minister can justify what was done in 1966 and can put just as much sympathy and feeling into his speech as he did then, then it is right for the government to carry on as they have. The hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton), a distinguished member of parliament, said yesterday that the government believes that with a little bit of luck everything will be all right. Like Micawber, they think something will turn up.

I should like to refer for a moment to the words of a man for whom I have great respect in this House of Commons, the present Prime Minister. What did he say on April 17, 1962, Mr. Speaker, as reported at page 3079 of *Hansard*? He said:

In closing I think I can do no better as this parliament comes to its untidy end than to quote Oliver Cromwell...