

Capital Punishment

for the bill as they are the ones who will decide the outcome. He says this bill is not perfect. That is an understatement. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), who began the debate for the official opposition, stated that he was somewhat cynical about the proposed free vote as far as the government side is concerned. I am aware that there are several abolitionists on this side of the House and nothing I could say would change their minds. I respect the views of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander), for example, even though I do not agree with him.

Mr. Alexander: And vice-versa.

Mr. Darling: I recall the Solicitor General some months ago stating that on this legislation there would be a free vote except for the government. I presume he meant the cabinet.

Mr. Allmand: I was wrong.

Mr. Darling: You bet you were wrong, sir. I am aware that the will in all probability vote 100 per cent for the bill even though some of them, if they were free to do so, would vote the other way. I point out that it seems ironic that there are 262 members in this House—there are two vacant seats at the present time—who represent all walks of life, and therefore one would expect they would reflect the views of the average Canadian. It would seem only logical that, not in the neighbourhood of 87.6 per cent but probably 70 per cent of the members of this House would feel the same way as the average Canadian. I recall a question asked in this House last Wednesday by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt), who I see in the House this afternoon. She asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the following:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Will the free vote on Bill C-84 be free to the cabinet?

That was a straightforward question, and from all sides of the House there was "Hear, hear." The Prime Minister stood up, and this was his pronouncement:

Mr. Speaker, a freer group of men and women still has to be found in Canada.

Certainly, that was a very diplomatic way of saying that all 28 or 29 members of the cabinet will vote as the Prime Minister sees fit. No one can tell me that those august men and women are all abolitionists. It may be of interest to parliamentarians that Ronald Reagan, the former governor of California, for a good number of years was an abolitionist, but he now states he is against the law which makes the death penalty unconstitutional. He says:

When I was governor, I saved the lives of 12 murderers. They were paroled or released, and now their score is 34 murders. They killed another 22 people.

I have listened to a good number of speeches on Bill C-84. Hon. members on both sides have spoken with feeling. I was most impressed by the remarks of my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche), who is one of those members who has had second thoughts. In the previous vote on capital punishment he supported the government, but has now come to the conclusion that Canada is not ready for the total abolition. He stated that he had done a great deal of soul-searching before coming to this decision.

[Mr. Darling.]

● (1600)

We are dealing with one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before this House: we are dealing with life and death.

Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) are constantly talking about peace and security—and I am wondering, for whom? It is my view that this bill, if passed, will only provide peace and security for the criminal element and murderers. And let me point out, Mr. Speaker, that I am not talking about murderers who have committed crimes of passion, or of drunken brawls. I am talking of cold-blooded, premeditated murder or the mafia-type killing—the killing of people during armed robbery and rape, and, of course, the killers of police and guards.

I should just mention, Mr. Speaker, that just before I turned off the television on Saturday night a movie came on entitled "Assassination Bureau", which I watched for a few moments. That movie would give ideas to anybody who wanted to get rid of an enemy. All they would have to do is contact this bureau or one like it.

Mr. Speaker, let me point out, also, that there should be longer mandatory sentences for armed robbery involving an offensive weapon, and longer sentences for people caught carrying offensive weapons; and, of course, longer sentences for crimes involving hard drugs. There are certain cold-blooded and violent murderers who cannot be rehabilitated. They have already committed murder and will do so again if given the opportunity. It is because of this that I feel the death penalty should be retained for certain types of violent murder.

Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned the death penalty, but I do not necessarily mean hanging, as I am opposed to this and feel that a much more humane method should be used, as long as the killer is permanently removed from society as quietly and efficiently as possible. Let me repeat that we are not ready for total abolition, the chief reason being the growing crime rate, combined with the government's present way of dealing with crime. Violent crime in Canada increased 90 per cent in the ten-year period 1965 to 1974. In 1965 there were 243 murders in the country; in 1974, 545. The murder rate in this period has doubled, from 1.2 per 100,000 population to 2.4. Despite the fact that 38 policemen and jail guards were murdered in this same ten-year period, no convicted murderer has been executed. Is it any wonder that the public is up in arms? A great majority of Canadians are now demanding a return to full capital punishment.

Let us now look at attempted murder. In 1961 there were 74 attempted murders in Canada—a rate of .5 per 100,000 population. In 1967 there were 139 attempted murders, a rate of .9 per cent, and in 1974 there were 524 attempted murders, a rate of 2.3 per cent. The actual number of attempted murders in 1974 was between seven and eight times the number of only 13 years earlier in 1961. In other words, by the grace of God only are the murder figures for 1974 not even worse. Over the same period, the death penalty has been increasingly modified in Canadian law and, indeed, not implemented at all. The murder rate has doubled and the attempted murder rate has quadrupled.