

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

follow a certain course and not be a jay-walker or things of that nature. I watch what I am doing on the streets of Ottawa because I do not want to be killed in a traffic accident by some person who is drunk, or by a bad driver. I have had too many narrow escapes not to be a little fearful. I do not differ that much from other people. There may be others who do not care whether they are killed today or tomorrow, but I think they are a very small percentage of the population.

As I mentioned last year, fear of death operates even among those people who are trained to kill, and like thousands of other Canadians I was trained to kill. I do not want to destroy anyone, but in wartime you have no choice. I do not recall any person of my acquaintance during wartime who, without being a coward, was not somewhat careful with regard to his own life. But again my experience is that men do not sacrifice their lives without some reason for it. They do not blindly sacrifice themselves. So I say that fear of death must operate generally in our society. However, there are those who tell me that the murderer takes a different view of life and that he is careless as to whether or not he is killed. He is so sure he will not be found out that he does not care about the penalty. Of course this is something that cannot be backed up by statistical evidence. The only impression I can form is from my own experience and I have reached the conclusion that some people at any rate are deterred by fear of death, and that consequently people like that would not commit a crime because they fear the consequences. Now, if I can be shown to be wrong, then I will have to change my opinion with regard to capital punishment.

● (4:30 p.m.)

Mr. Nugent: Would the hon. member accept a question?

Mr. Churchill: Yes, sir.

Mr. Nugent: The hon. member has said he cannot find that the statistics show anything. I suppose he has looked at them, and finds that the statistics for those states that have capital punishment, and those states where they do not, seem to be about the same. If the hon. member feels that the fear of death should be such a deterrent, would he not expect to find a marked difference in the statistics, if his argument is correct?

Mr. Churchill: I dealt with that argument last year. I quoted the figures from the white

paper and I reached the conclusion that nothing was proven either way. If the hon. member can go beyond that, if he will look at what I said on April 5 at page 3866 of *Hansard*, then perhaps he will find his answer. He did not take the precaution of reading my speech of last year. If he will read that and then later on, either here in the House of Commons or when we meet somewhere else, indicate to me that I reached the wrong conclusion, I will be very happy. I know that he will express his point of view with vigour. I was not convinced then and I still am not convinced. I did not say the statistics did not show anything, which is what the hon. member said. I said they did not prove the case.

I dealt with the sanctity of life. This, sir, is a powerful argument indeed. We like to think that human life should be held sacred. We have been living in an age of violence, when we have become callous and indifferent to the loss of human life. Our highway accidents alone, sir, show the indifference of our populace to this. We have not sufficiently stringent laws to curtail the slaughter that occurs on our highways. The state has proven itself indifferent to the sanctity of life because it has failed to take the necessary measures with regard to that problem of our society. I think we could give many other examples to indicate we are not sufficiently concerned with the sanctity of life.

When I read the mortality tables for some areas of Canada, I find they are shocking. Where is our concern for the sanctity of human life? Why are we not doing more about it? I think we are living in an age of violence, in an age when we are indifferent to the sanctity of human life. When this aspect of the question is raised during a discussion of capital punishment, it does not seem to me that it carries as much weight as may perhaps be intended by those who deal with that particular subject.

I suppose one's attitude is coloured by his experience in life. I have lived during a period when the sanctity of human life has been ignored by the world as a whole, when positively millions of people have been killed in one way or another. This, I suppose, has had an effect on society generally, and has made us less sensitive to the problem that we would be if we had been living in a more peaceful period. However, I am not going to prolong what I have to say now. I think that I cannot do any better than read a few of the