

Capital Punishment

Mr. Blaker: Mr. Speaker, I must respond to the last intervention. The suggestion that the leader of the Liberal party informed, instructed, or commanded the members of his party on how to vote is ridiculous, when one considers the actual vote which took place and the split in his party.

An hon. Member: Not in cabinet.

Mr. Blaker: I do not know how the hon. member goes on believing that ridiculous assumption. But I want to make the point which I rose to address. I will not spend too much time on the subject matter of capital punishment. It will be debated nine times, ten times, or whatever number of times, before it finally gets before the House for a vote. I respect the opinion of every member in this regard. They will vote as they see fit. Some, regrettably, will understand their roles as members of the House of Commons as being that they ought to vote on the basis of some unscientific and inoperative poll of their riding. That is their business. I want to address myself to the issue. A bill of such importance, or a motion in this case, will appear again and again. It will be bootlegged into the House, smuggled into the House.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): It is not bootlegging.

Mr. Blaker: I want to make it clear that the action I am taking is a deliberate effort on my part, for as many minutes as I stand in the House of Commons, to talk out that motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blaker: I am prepared to go on the record, and be seen and known in the public to do so. On the simple understanding that the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative party does not have the moral fortitude to stand in this House in the normal way and to deal with capital punishment in the normal way, then I am prepared to use the procedures of the House to deny him or his members the right to bootleg a bill in. We are getting to the point where we will have hanging by accident, if this goes on.

I want every member to have a full opportunity to discuss this; not have it smuggled into the House for debate in one hour and slipped into committee before anyone knows what is happening. I want to see the Prime Minister of Canada stand up in his place and vote on this issue.

Some hon. Members: He will.

Mr. Blaker: Until he stands in his place—

An hon. Member: Where is he?

Mr. Blaker: Until he is prepared to be in the House of Commons to debate capital punishment, I will do everything I can to prevent this motion from going to committee.

An hon. Member: Hon. members opposite are afraid of the vote.

Mr. Blaker: I should like to finish off by referring to one or two quotes, if I may. I will quote a leading member of the

[Mr. Knowles.]

House of Commons, as I heard someone refer to that this afternoon, on the subject of capital punishment. He said the following:

—it has been my judgment that capital punishment does not function as a deterrent in the case of those peculiar people who commit murder.

I am quoting the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada.

An hon. Member: We know how he stands.

Mr. Blaker: Why is he not here discussing the issue, if this is what he believes?

An hon. Member: Where is he?

Mr. Blaker: I wonder if I might quote that same gentleman again. He said:

What we have to do is determine whether the threat of capital punishment would stop those people who are likely to . . . commit murder, from undertaking that act. I have seen no firm evidence to suggest that the threat of capital punishment is a deterrent.

Again this was said by the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada on an issue of such moral importance, and that man is not in the House. The Prime Minister is not in the House at this time to discuss or debate this issue or take his stand. Until the Prime Minister is prepared to take his stand publicly, I am prepared to use the procedures of the House to deny the passage of this motion directly to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCain): The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) on a point of order.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I think it ought to be brought to the attention of the hon. member that it could hardly be conceived that anyone with views on capital punishment, such as those of the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), could bring forward a bill to restore capital punishment.

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

An hon. Member: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): The hon. member is talking absolute rubbish. But the Prime Minister is prepared to let other hon. members bring forward the bill.

Mr. Blaker: Mr. Speaker, I know the Prime Minister is prepared to allow other members to bring forward this bill. The rules of the House of Commons make it clear that any member can bring forward a bill through the normal course of the draw and the procedures of the House.

An hon. Member: But you are talking about bootlegging.

An hon. Member: What is wrong with it? It is not bootlegging.

Mr. Rose: They are upset.

Mr. Blaker: The hon. member for Mission-Port Moody (Mr. Rose), who is a very respected and dignified member of the House of Commons, advises me that I am making members