

Criminal Code

were pictured to our minds. I think the latter was the correct interpretation.

It is a horrible thing; but to the extent that the death penalty may act as a deterrent, then everyone on this committee and in this house should be most reluctant to change the law as it now stands until he has heard more convincing evidence than has yet been submitted. That may come, and if it does come I have no doubt the committee will listen and give careful consideration to what is said; but I would hope that the very natural instinct of humanity to look with consideration toward any other human being will not be carried to the extent of doing anything that will make it more likely that young men will put weapons in their pockets, carry knives or do those things that have brought so much tragedy to this and other countries.

I am not overlooking one thing that was mentioned by one hon. member here today. I am not overlooking the fact that some murders are committed by those whose condition has been brought about by alcohol. That very fact imposes upon those who are charged with any responsibility in that respect the duty of exercising the greatest caution and the greatest restraint that can be exercised in regard to the abuse of alcohol. The record is clear. I think there are many instances of violence by those crazed with alcohol. With that in mind an attempt should be made to follow a course that will discourage people carrying lethal weapons, and to keep before the minds of those who may be engaged in some other enterprises the dangers of following a course that may carry them to murder itself.

The trend in this country should not be a trend that will throw the doors open wider to crimes of violence of any kind, but rather in this country of ours our first thought should be of those decent citizens who at all times should be protected.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch), the hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Knight), the hon. member for Regina City (Mr. Ellis) and the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. MacInnis) have expressed views on this question of capital punishment with which I agree. Therefore I shall not take the time of the house to repeat any arguments which they have put forward. However, in view of the way in which this debate has gone I feel constrained to rise and make what I think is an additional argument in support of the abolition of capital punishment.

Before I indicate the additional argument which I wish to make I want to say that I

am glad the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) has made the proposal that a joint committee be established to go into this and other questions. I certainly hope that the consideration given to these questions by that committee will be objective. I express that hope despite the trend of the discussion back and forth in the house this afternoon and evening. As I listened, not only to the speeches that have been made but to the volume of applause on one side rather than the other, it has appeared to me that maybe the case is weighted on one side even before the committee meets.

Mr. Garson: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might in the friendliest way possible raise a point of order which I perhaps should have raised at a much earlier stage in the debate. The motion which is before the house at the present time is to set up a committee which, if it is to do its duty effectively, must approach its task in the most objective manner. The sole question is whether that committee will be set up or not set up. I should think that in relation to that subject a debate upon the merits or demerits of capital punishment would be of all debates most calculated to prejudice in advance the efforts of the committee.

In saying this I am in complete agreement with the remarks just made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I wonder if the hon. member, with a concern for order that perhaps not all of us are able to equal, will not be one of the first to deal with the subject which is under discussion, that is whether we shall or shall not set up this committee. If we set up the committee, I think everyone in the house will agree that it will get off to a much better start in its important task if the water has not been muddied by acrimonious debate on the merits or demerits of the subject matter upon which the committee will try to decide and report.

Mr. Knowles: On the point of order which has been raised by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I might have found it easier to go along with him if he had raised it much earlier in the day, in fact if he had raised it during the course of the first speech that went into the substance of the question of capital punishment. I might also have found it easier to go along with him if he had not indicated, when he was anxious to get the debate closed on the motion for second reading of Bill No. 7, that there would be an opportunity to discuss the question of capital punishment on this motion to appoint a committee.

Mr. Garson: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting for a moment