

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

cell after committing a crime but the heart-breaking situation in which the victims or the wives of the victims of murderers or of criminals without conscience is always ignored or set aside.

If I may refer to a few notes which I had the opportunity of picking up and studying—it might be good to draw the attention of the house to the fact that in the province of Ontario for instance the government is seriously studying the possibility of establishing a system of compensation. A similar study is also under way in Alberta, but no concrete action has been taken. On the other hand, a white paper has been submitted to the Manitoba legislature, in which the operation of such a compensation system is described. I think that the Solicitor General or the senior officials of his department would be well advised to study closely the proposals contained in this white paper.

It should also be noted, Mr. Speaker, that section 474 of the municipal by-laws of the city of Vancouver contain the following provision:

[*English*]

Upon the recommendation of the board, the council may in its discretion award compensation not exceeding the sum of \$5,000 to any person who has sustained loss by reason of property damage or by reason of personal injuries to or the death of a person occasioned by such person having assisted a police constable in the execution of his duties.

● (3:50 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Of course, the rules which exist in Vancouver aim simply at protecting or rewarding in some way those who help police officers acting in the course of their duties.

A compensation system in Canada could consist of a federal-provincial fund to which the federal government and the various provincial governments would subscribe and which would be used to compensate the crime victims or the families of crime victims. This compensation fund, Mr. Speaker, could be administered by a special board which could be set up by each province, or by a crime victims compensation board, and the money used to compensate the unfortunate victims of crime would come from this federal-provincial fund.

And I think that it is urgent to have such a thought, once again, to give confidence to the people who are worrying, and rightly so. As for the members who do not believe that, let them travel through their ridings and ask their constituents what they think. People tell us: You always do something for the

criminals; now do something for the victims. That is what we hear in our ridings; sometimes we hear startling remarks from these people who wonder to what extent they will be protected in the future. That is why the government should launch an information campaign which would show clearly the generous attention given by the government to criminals' victims.

Mr. Speaker, those are the few remarks I wanted to make. I wish to say, in closing, that in 1967, especially for a government which set up the whole social machinery we are enjoying today, it might be its greatest achievement if it perfected that procedure and took with the provinces the initiative of creating a compensation system in favour of the victims of criminals or the families of those victims, and not only of those who came to the help of police officers on duty. That is urgent, essential and fundamental if we want to create, in the minds of the people, the image of a government which is concerned, not only about the criminals, but also about society in general, about its protection and especially about the protection of the victims of those scoundrels, those bandits without conscience or respect for anything except fear.

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable attention and respect to the speech made by the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Choquette). I think it is one of his serious speeches. I congratulate him and exhort him to continue in this vein.

I must also say that I was impressed by the way the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) introduced his bill to the house. I want to congratulate him and I must say that it is the most important and the most difficult case that he has pleaded in his political career. He has done so with complete objectivity and I must say that it was most agreeable to hear him, particularly to read over the arguments he submitted to the consideration of the house.

Obviously, we could recapitulate all the arguments brought forth during this debate and ask: Was it necessary for the government to require the house to make a decision once again on such an important question?

Last year, we had the opportunity, through a free vote, to reject private bills to abolish capital punishment. This year, according to reports and surveys by the Canadian Press and other papers, the spread in the 142 to 112 vote may be still reduced. We may well