

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

but keep your hands off a prison guard or a policeman.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Ralliement créditiste are absolutely free to vote according to their conscience. But, as far as I am concerned, I shall definitely vote for the retention of capital punishment, not in a spirit of revenge against the individual who attacks his neighbour or kills someone, but for the sake of justice in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, several persons suggest that hanging is obsolete and horrible. Surely, it is horrible. But what of the bandit who kills the father of 4 or 5 children, for instance, or the criminal who killed two Montreal policemen, in the performance of their duties, after taking the trouble of dressing up like Santa Claus—on the occasion of Christmas, on top of it all—giving young children the impression that Santa Claus can be dangerous since their father was murdered by a bandit dressed up as one?

Mr. Speaker, that murderer knew what he was doing when he dressed up as Santa Claus. He knew very well what he was going to do at the bank he went to rob; he knew very well what he was doing when he shot five or six times with his revolver, or rather with his submachine-gun, the policemen stretched out on the ground. A tommy-gun is not an ice cream cone, nor is it a pair of velvet mitts. He knew the tommy-gun was loaded, what it could cause.

And now, it is going to be claimed that vengeance moves us to sentence him to hang? If that is the way we are going to reason things out, then I say this: Why sentence a thief to five years in a penitentiary? Is it for vengeance that we condemn the thief? Why not close down all the prisons in Canada and say to the thief: We do not want revenge for ourselves, old boy. You stole, yes; only, we want no part in vengeance, and sentencing you to five or ten years in the pen would be vengeance. And so you are free; but try not to repeat your thefts, try not to steal again. Would it be logical to abolish our prison system or judicial system to that extent? Abolishing hanging is the same thing.

The execution of a murderer is no more by way of a reprisal than the sentencing of an armed robber, let us say, to 10 years in jail, with hard labour. It is the same thing. Some will say: Well, we killed him, but it satisfied nobody. Perhaps this is true, but it certainly got rid of a public menace within society. It is in that spirit, Mr. Speaker, that I will vote for the retention of the death penalty.

[Mr. Caouette.]

I understand the arguments advanced by the Prime Minister the other day and submitted by him to public scrutiny and to the house to influence as much as possible the members on the government side and perhaps also, some members of the opposition. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, I agree. However, Mr. Speaker, there are serious dangers involved in abolition, or retention of the death penalty only for murderers of policemen, jail guards or permanent jail employees while on duty.

At this stage, I repeat what I said earlier. Since 1962, there has been no hanging in Canada. Has the number of murders decreased? No. Bandits remain bandits; murderers continued to kill right and left. Therefore, we have proof that commutations or abolition of capital punishment have not deterred the murderers from killing people around them, when they were in a tight situation, if you like. However, when they are in a tight situation, it is because they decided to get into such a mess. Then, let them suffer the consequences or let them pay for the results of their actions.

Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) should not have presented this bill when we have lots of important matters to discuss since there is no hanging pending, at the present time, in short, when all death sentences have been commuted. However, we could have easily—and it was much more urgent—discussed the economic situation which prevails now in Canada in order to improve living conditions and to decrease the number of Canadian citizens who become robbers and bandits for many reasons, but especially because they cannot earn an honest and decent living in their own country. Such things are seen among juvenile delinquents who are willing to work and seeking jobs, who want to prepare their future, but who do not stand a chance and are led astray, commit acts of vandalism and eventually become criminals. That is the situation today.

Mr. Speaker, it is not with pieces of legislation such as Bill No. C-168 that we shall improve the situation in Canada, and the Solicitor General is aware of it and he knows that we have proof in that connection. If someone could give me proof that the number of murders has decreased in the past five years, compared to the five year period before 1962, I would readily accept the bill, but such is not the case. There were just as many murders since 1962 as before that date, when murderers were hanged. Since 1962, no