

Capital Punishment

board of directors accept recommendations which might not be in keeping with the good of the country as a whole.

These are principles that I think we ignore at considerable risk to the structures that we have created in this country, that are unique to this country and with which to date we have had a certain level of success. Where these techniques have been implanted into other countries, their level of success has not been as great because the members of their legislatures have not been able to stand away to allow their handiwork, which is the act of the legislature establishing corporations, to be carried through by the boards of directors and managements that they have selected.

By and large we have used Crown corporations in this country for a variety of purposes. For example, we have used Crown corporations to provide services that we have deemed essential but for which purpose there was little private capital and little or no willingness to accept responsibility. The creation of Trans-Canada Air Lines, now Air Canada, is a perfect example of that kind of operation. Air Canada, with its private board of directors and the financing that the government of Canada has provided to it, has given Canada a unique and efficient service. But even then I could point out that a few years ago a deterioration began to set in in the operations of Air Canada, a problem that was solved to some extent by providing competition from CP Air. Under the regional air transportation policy, additional competition was provided by CP Air and other regional carriers, which has forced the larger companies to pay attention to competitive pressure which formerly they were not sufficiently taking into account.

It seems to me that this kind of decision-making by government and by parliament has far superior efficacy than the pleading of a number of Members of Parliament on boards of directors or the pleading of representatives of all parties on boards of directors to attempt to get something done for a particular region. I must say I accept—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret I must interrupt the hon. member, but the hour appointed for the consideration of private members' business has expired. I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CRIMINAL CODE

REINSTATEMENT OF LAW RELATING TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT THAT EXISTED PRIOR TO DECEMBER 30, 1972

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Allmand that Bill C-2, to amend the Criminal Code, be

[Mr. Reid.]

read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, at five o'clock when the House gave consideration to other important matters I had just finished saying that while this bill lacked the perfection I should like to have seen in it, because I have been used to this House for over 15 years and understand that perfection is something we are not likely to see here in the form of legislation, I intend to support the bill on second reading, with all its imperfections. The gods must have been amused by this inconsistent society of man which after grave deliberation says that the taking of life is the worst of all possible crimes and then proceeds deliberately to fix for that crime the punishment of death by hanging. I think of what Montaigne said:

There is no man so good who were he to submit all his thoughts and actions to the law, would not deserve hanging ten times in his life.

Much has been said in this debate on the philosophical and ethical aspects of this matter and it would be a waste of time to repeat many of the very good arguments that have been made here. As I have said, this is the fifth debate on this subject in which I have participated in the House and my views are on the record many times. I suggest there are certain collateral issues which have crept into the debate, have become part of it, and we must consider them in light of the subject matter which is the issue of this bill.

One issue is the relationship between the elected representative, the Member of Parliament, and the people. It would be improper, wrong, foolhardy and stupid for any elected representative at any level of government to suggest he can ignore, deny or refuse to give most careful consideration to what his constituents in particular, and the people of the country in general, have to say at any time on any given issue. Certainly, the views of the people who elect us must play an exceedingly important part in the decisions which we individually come to in this House.

Polls are not completely reliable, and letter writers are those who feel most strongly about an issue. I am very happy to know that there are in this country people who feel very definitely and positively about things and will write letters to support those feelings. But it has been my experience, not only in this House but in other places, that the people who write letters are those who have the determination to put their views on the record. But they are not, alone—for that reason—safe criteria of the general feeling of the country.

I have lived with this issue for many years. I would say that eight or nine years ago a reasonable majority of the people in this country were opposed, in general principle, to capital punishment on the basis on which it then stood in the law. Even taking into account all the safeguards in assessing public opinion—and I have given a few of them here—if it be correct that the majority of people today favour capital punishment, and I think probably it is, I suggest it is equally true that 10 or 15 years from now—I venture to make this prediction—a substantial majority of the people in this country and those in most western, democratic countries, will stand up and indicate they are