

*Capital Punishment*

for that. We are talking about the most heinous crime, murder; the willful taking of another's life.

There was an incident just this week in the United States, I believe it was. In any event it occurred on a bus when, with the slightest provocation, a passenger pulled a gun, shot and killed another passenger on the bus, then ran off and disappeared somewhere, probably never to be found again. If that had happened in Canada and he had been found, the government's proposal is that if he were convicted of murder, and that is not even certain, he would simply be sent to prison for life. Of course life is subject to definition. The bill would lead you to believe that life means 25 years. I would hope that many men who were convicted of murder and sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment might, when they came out, be so old and feeble they could no longer be considered a menace to society. But our prisons are not always like that.

The situation in prison is untenable and certainly unpleasant, and when a man of any age whatever is facing 25 years in prison what is another life? He can only serve one. The Solicitor General and his friends over there were so accommodating to accept the amendment of my colleague, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), which provided that one accused of murder for the second time would be charged with first degree murder. What a sop that is.

Those on the other side do not seem to have considered that these killers have contacts on the outside. They have certain abilities. We heard during the question period today about guns and ammunition being found inside prisons. There are countless stories of weapons being fabricated in prison workshops. At the British Columbia penitentiary in the last 16 months there have been seven hostage incidents. I do not know how many deaths have resulted from them, but certainly there have been some.

I would ask those on the other side, and the government which presented this bill, to consider the effect on the work of prison guards particularly, and on the very people we call upon to enforce our laws, the police all over this country. I do not understand how we can be so fortunate in Canada to have a force of policemen and prison guards remaining on duty today. The government have shown that it cares not at all for the lives of these policemen and prison guards.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said to the retentionists that if capital punishment were retained in Canada somebody would hang, and that such hanging would be on the shoulders of the retentionists. Of course that is the case, and I do not think there is any retentionist in this House who does not fully realize that and is not fully willing to accept the responsibility. Neither the Prime Minister, the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) nor any single member of that cabinet over there apparently had any consideration for the responsibility that would fall upon them and all of the abolitionists who voted in favour of this bill for the death, by any gruesome method, of any innocent member of society in Canada. It disturbs me greatly; more than that, it confounds me how such a caring group of people could so easily dismiss the fate of some innocent members of society.

[Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra).]

I have heard all the bleeding heart arguments about how we must be kind to prisoners because society was mean to them and we must try to rehabilitate them because they are really good people. I could not really argue that there is some amount of truth in it, but how can that be a truth when it is applied to a hired killer, someone who has been paid thousands of dollars to kill a person? How can that be applied to the killers in Montreal last year who locked up 13 people and burned the place down? I have not heard a single argument from the government side, or from the abolitionist side, to justify the saving of the life of this kind of person.

● (1540)

The abolitionists are all very concerned about the lives of a few murderers in this country. How many can there be? Why should they spend all this time agonizing over this scum of the earth? Why do we not worry a little bit about you and me? Why do we not worry a little about the policemen's widows and children? Six thousand people are killed on the roads in this country, but this hardly gets a headline. People are used to this sort of thing; it is not news. But one murderer who for some heinous crime against society deserves to die, deserves to be removed from society permanently, gets all the attention. It is absolutely incomprehensible.

I often think that there is very little difference between the abolitionists and retentionists in most cases. I have spent many hours talking to my friends and my colleagues who are abolitionists and I find that we agree right down the line up to a point. My abolitionist friends agree that persons convicted of murder should be removed from society permanently. The only difference that we seem to have is in how to implement it permanently. The abolitionists say that such a person should be kept in jail for the rest of his natural life. When the bill was finally presented to us we found that "the rest of his natural life" has been reduced to 15 years, and although I cannot interpret all the technicalities in the Solicitor General's bill, my information is that many murderers will be out of prison in much less than 25 years, perhaps 15. I have even heard, and I have not had it refuted yet, that escorted absences may be allowed after one year in prison.

If the abolitionists and retentionists agree that a murderer guilty of some terrible crime against society should be removed from that society permanently, then the argument should simply evolve on how best to achieve that end. Obviously if the removal from society is achieved by executing the guilty person, that is fine. We heard from my colleague, the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), that the law we are passing now is not final. Well, it may not be final for the murderers but you can be sure it will be final for a good deal more innocent victims that it would have been if the opposite case were true.

I have asked many of my abolitionist friends how we should keep these horrible offenders away from society if we do not execute them, so that the innocent members of society are protected in this so called free and democratic country of ours. Well, they say, we will put them in prison. Then we get right back to the argument about how we should keep them in prison where, skilled as they may be, they have nothing better to do all day in prison but to make their weapons, or receive them over the fence, and