

listened with great care to what the Prime Minister said on that subject. While he and I disagree on the basic issue, it is an important part of Canadian democracy to review these very fundamental questions from time to time. The Canadian people demanded that in 1984. I am pleased that the Government is permitting, although not initiating, the process which will discharge that commitment.

● (2020)

**Mr. de Corneille:** Mr. Speaker, I have both a question and a comment. I think this kind of debate and dialogue is very helpful. My hope is, of course, that I would be able to persuade my colleagues about some of these issues.

The questioner and the speaker have said that this allows us to discuss the subject of capital punishment and that the public is given access to that opportunity. If we vote upon and pass this resolution, will we not be saying that this House supports, in principle, the reinstatement of capital punishment? In other words, our decision will then be made. We will not wait for the committee to go across the country and report back. When we vote on this motion we will be voting in principle.

Second, the committee is not being asked to listen to people's opinions on capital punishment but, rather, will be sent across the country "to provide recommendations on (a) which offence or offences should carry the death penalty, and in what circumstances; (b) which method or methods should be used to carry out the penalty of death". Those are the words in the actual motion we are debating.

If, as the Hon. Member suggested, this committee would be able to travel across the country and, for example, have the benefit of hearing those criminologists in Alberta of which the Hon. Member was talking and explore the statistics further as a committee, that would be one thing. However, I understand that if this motion were to pass, God forbid, the committee will not be going to discuss capital punishment but, rather, how to do it and when. Would the speaker like to clarify his views on that?

**Mr. Edwards:** Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend opposite is missing the essential point of the resolution. The essential point is that this committee would determine under what circumstances, if any, capital punishment should be brought back. That does not mean, as I suggest my hon. friend might be implying, that an affirmative vote will mean the reinstatement of capital punishment. The Member, who has infinitely more experience than I, knows that the process is much more laborious than that.

There would first be the activity of the committee, the reporting back of the committee, and the formulation of a Bill which, I imagine, would be a Bill to amend the Criminal Code of Canada. That Bill, like any Bill in this House, would be subject to a majority vote for approval. I understand very clearly that the vote at that final stage would be a vote permitting amendments and all the other privileges that are

available to this House and its Members. Finally, that would be a free vote.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now terminated.

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, this will be the fifth time since I became a Member of Parliament that I will be voting on this question. As I have on the four previous occasions, I intend again to vote for abolition and against the reimposition of capital punishment.

While it is the fifth time I will be voting, it is the first time I will have participated in the debate. A substantial part of the reason I am participating in the debate is that I am appalled by the threats which have been made to impose a form of closure on the Members of this House. If I remember correctly, in the debate in 1976 there were over 100 speakers. If this question is as important as those who are so passionately committed to the reimposition of capital punishment believe, then surely they ought to be the first to accept the idea that every Member of Parliament who wishes to put his or her position on the record should have the opportunity to speak.

The Government decides the order of business. It could have brought this proposal forth a long time ago and provided sufficient time for every Member who wished to speak to do so. We ought not be rushed into making a decision because we are coming close to the summer adjournment.

The view which I have just expressed was supported in the 1976 debate by the former Member of Parliament for Yukon, the former Deputy Prime Minister, Erik Nielsen, with whom I very seldom, if ever, agreed. During that debate he said: "I do not endorse the point of view expressed in one of the newspaper editorials tonight that closure should be imposed. I believe Members should have an opportunity to speak". I too, Mr. Speaker, believe that Members should have an opportunity to speak.

I have not taken a poll of my constituents but I am willing to accept the reality that the majority of them, like the majority in every constituency in Canada I think, support the imposition of capital punishment. I did not come here to vote because a poll on any particular subject has been taken and tells me what to do. I told the people of my constituency my beliefs on the major issues with which we would probably have to deal. I have reported to them regularly on the position I have taken. They have known that after each debate on this subject I have voted for abolition. That has not affected me adversely at all.

I have told my constituents who believe very strongly in capital punishment that when deciding who to vote for I would like them to look at the record of how I had voted and what I had said on all the issues which come before Parliament. If they believe in capital punishment and believe that I was wrong to vote against it, they have the democratic right to vote for someone else, to elect another person to be their Member of Parliament. I have survived four of those votes and am confident that I will survive a fifth.