

to progress is in the direction of the abolition of capital punishment. Those who disagree may not feel this way; but I think that is the way of progress and that the issue will not be settled until we have gone all the way. However, whatever the Prime Minister may have said in the speech from the throne in 1966 in the words which he put into the Governor General's mouth, it is obvious that the vote did not settle the question once and for all.

An hon. Member: No, no. We did vote.

Mr. Knowles: Have there been any hangings since that vote was taken?

Mr. Choquette: No.

Mr. Knowles: All right; at least in the eyes of the government the matter was not settled once and for all. I believe the government had the right and the responsibility, since it was not prepared to accept that vote as an indication of the way it should go, to bring its own measure before parliament. The motion of 1966 was not a government measure; it was a measure brought in by four private members. Now we have a measure brought in, which is a cabinet measure. Even though there is a so-called free vote, it is government legislation. I suggest this is a much clearer way to determine the will of parliament on this issue. What will happen, if there should be a murder of a prison guard or a policeman, when the conviction comes before the cabinet, is another question. There still may be commutation, and therefore even that part of the issue may not be settled by this. But if we pass this bill, then at least in 99 out of 100 cases we will be doing away with the death sentence and the law which requires that society do away with certain human beings.

I suggest, even though I would have preferred to see a bill which provides for total abolition, that the government is to be commended for bringing before the house a workable compromise and one which moves in the right direction. Because it moves in the right direction I hope the house will give this bill its endorsement.

Mr. Korchinski: May I ask the hon. member a question? In view of the fact that this now is a government bill before the house, does he not think that conceivably it could be construed as a vote of confidence in this government and that a measure like this might bring on an election?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, because of the way in which the government has introduced the bill I hardly believe it could be considered as a measure which would bring about a vote of confidence in the government in the usual political sense. However, I think it is a crucial test of the government's moral authority. I think the government is morally right in the stand it has taken, and I hope the house will support it.

Mr. Mongrain: Mr. Speaker, could I venture to put another question to the hon. member?

Mr. Knowles: Certainly.

Mr. Mongrain: Will the hon. member have the same attitude when the government refuses to increase pensions to civil servants after dozens and indeed hundreds of interventions by the hon. member?

Mr. Knowles: Yes, I take the same attitude. No question is settled once and for all until it is settled the right way.

An hon. Member: And the right way is your way.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William): Mr. Speaker, the reason I wish to speak on second reading of the bill is that I have taken part in every debate on the subject of capital punishment since Mr. Frank McGee, former member for York-Scarborough, introduced a bill in the house in 1959, and similar bills in 1960 and 1961 and again on April 5, 1966. I have spoken in every debate on this subject because it is a humanitarian question of great interest to the people of Canada.

I spoke on those occasions in support of the principle of abolition. Now I propose to endorse wholeheartedly the bill which the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) introduced with an eloquence and sincerity that would have done justice to a Winston Churchill. I wish to congratulate the Solicitor General.

After each of my former modest contributions to the debates, having expressed my views against the retention of capital punishment I invited comments from my constituents. As a result I received a great number of letters for and against the retention of the death penalty, with the number favouring abolition on the increase each successive year.

Judging from this experience I found that clergymen in general were against the death penalty. Most judges and policemen are for