

*Amendments Respecting Death Sentence*

For a month, I have been holding a referendum on capital punishment in my constituency; to date, I have received 1316 replies. I asked the people: "Are you for or against the death penalty?" Out of 1316 replies, 754 were in favour of retaining the death penalty, 502 were for abolition and 60 were uncertain, undecided.

Mr. Speaker, this breakdown is strangely similar to that of the first free vote we had in this house, a year and a half or two years ago, on capital punishment.

What I find inconsistent in this bill is that, for a trial period—a period of five years—death sentences will be limited strictly to the murder of police officers, guards and other officers or permanent employees of prisons acting in the course of their duties.

Let us suppose, for instance, that the Prime Minister of Canada, wherever he is, is attacked by a gangster and that his body-guard is killed. The gangster or killer would then be executed. But if he did not kill the body-guard and the Prime Minister himself were killed, the same killer would be sentenced to life imprisonment. He would not be executed, he would not be hanged.

I find this bill illogical. Besides, the government has all it needs; it has been doing it for five years now. Why come again before the house with this bill when the matter was voted upon democratically in this house? The reasons still hold which moved the members to vote against the abolition of the death penalty a year and a half ago. Moreover, neither gangsters nor murderers have changed in their behaviour.

Now, I agree that the legislation should provide that the guilt of a murderer must be proven beyond any doubt before he is sentenced to hang. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I agree that there is room for improvement in the present act. However, I am not in favour of abolishing capital punishment outright, except for murderers of prison guards or employees. I feel that every Canadian, without exception, is entitled to the same protection, to the same treatment, as any policeman, any prison guard or employee. Simple and elementary justice calls for the same treatment for the whole population.

If a murderer kills a police officer or a prison guard, he cannot be hanged twice, of course, but let him be hanged if the murder is really capital murder and there is not the shadow of a doubt. However, let us do the same in the case of the Prime Minister, a member of parliament, a worker in the

Noranda mine, a white collar worker or a farmer. These people are entitled to life just like any police officer or prison guard, and no murderer has the right to make any attempt on anyone's life. Therefore, I submit that Bill No. C-168 should not have been introduced in the house. The vote taken in the house a year and a half ago should have been abided by; it was unequivocal, it seems to me. We had received all explanations; hon. members had expressed themselves freely. Today, some hon. members have changed their minds because, in my opinion, pressure has been put on them. And then they were told: Listen, let's try it for five years. And in five years, the law will stay the way it will be after this bill is passed.

Mr. Speaker, the number of murderers and bandits is increasing in Canada. Today, and for five years now, they tell themselves: No one is hanged, every sentence is commuted to life imprisonment. In the case of life imprisonment, the murderer is paroled after 12, 15 or 20 years. There have been typical cases in Quebec. A man who had murdered a young girl was put in prison, sentenced to death but later on paroled, and he killed four other young people. He was arrested again, imprisoned and sentenced to death a second time, and once again his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. They say: The man was insane. He is jailed and his execution is put off from month to month. It is not put off but the sentence is merely commuted.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who try to kill their neighbour know what they are doing. Recently, there was a holdup in Rouyn-Noranda, my home town. A gangster broke into the Montemurro and aimed his gun at one of the employees and pulled the trigger. Fortunately, the gun did not go off. There was no shot, but the gangster actually said: I will kill you. He knew exactly what he was doing.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, it is said of those people who are ready to kill anyone, anywhere, even when they are in a tight spot: Oh, they were in a tight spot! Why? Because they had placed themselves in that situation. Those are premeditated assaults, and we are going to pass a legislation which will mean this: Gentlemen, kill whoever you want, except policemen and prison guards, kill the Governor General of Canada, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Neveu), or anyone else, you will not hang,