

*Capital Punishment*

That is one of a great many letters that have gone to the press and to various members of parliament. I appreciate that it is a free vote and that it is up to each of us to decide how to vote and then answer to our constituents. I am hoping that members of parliament will look at it in this way. Needless to say, I am rather cynical as to the outcome, but I hope I shall be surprised on Wednesday and that Bill C-84 will be defeated.

**Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane):** Mr. Speaker, we are on the threshold of the passage of this bill and I do not intend to hold up the House for very long. I have a few words I should like to say since I have not spoken in the debate on this bill. There are some things, that have been said throughout this debate, and repeated again today, that I think should be challenged.

First of all, we do have a free vote in the House on this bill and it is a question of personal conscience. For some members of the press and even some members of the House continually to suggest that it is not a free vote I think is degrading and certainly an insult to the members of the House. There is no such thing as coercion or anything else exercised on anyone, to my knowledge, and it seems to me that if that sort of thing were going on on this side of the House I would be one of those approached to change my stand, just as would any other abolitionist. That is certainly not the case.

The point is that in our system the member of parliament is the representative of the people in his constituency. We have a representative kind of government. We come here to represent our constituents who have elected us, each with his own general make-up and morality and everything else that goes to make him or her a human being. They have voted for us because they like everything about us in general. They do not accept everything we say. Perhaps they do not agree with every word we utter or every idea we propose, but in general they accept us as men and women whom they send here to represent them. This does not mean to say that they are telling us we had better vote exactly the way they say we should vote in every instance.

To say that the majority of the people are retentionists and that we should be following the will of the majority oversimplifies this question. In the first place, who says that the majority of the people are retentionists? Gallup polls and the rest. Since when have Gallup polls been the last word on what is the will of the people? In the first place, I suspect the retentionists are far more vocal than abolitionists on this question, and therefore that would throw the poll out immediately. I do not think the majority of the people of this country are retentionists. In my constituency there are a lot of people who have written to me and made representations who are retentionists, but there are also many others who are abolitionists and who made their point of view known.

One group in particular, consisting of the major Christian churches, have officially come out against the retention of the death penalty. This is a very sizeable group, Mr. Speaker. I am not suggesting that everyone who belongs to a church in Canada follows everything that their church says, necessarily, but the majority of the people in my constituency are God-fearing and believe in the religion they practice. Generally speaking, they follow the ideas put

[Mr. Darling.]

forth by the morality of their particular religion. I feel that those who have expressed their point of view on a religious basis in my constituency are sincere in so doing. Certainly, they believe it is not right to take a life. In my view, no human being or group of human beings has the right to take the life of another human being. That is the principle upon which I stand, and neither pressure nor anything else would make me sell my soul.

● (1630)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The question is, therefore, on the amendment by the hon. member for Middlesex-London-Lambton (Mr. Condon). All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

**Mr. Blais:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the order passed on Friday last relating to the deferral of votes until Wednesday there has been a discussion with House leaders, with an agreement that the vote on the amendment be deferred until two o'clock on Wednesday of this week.

[Translation]

**Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There has been no understanding that the amendment would be voted on Wednesday only. We would like to have it now, and if the bill is not negatived today the final vote on abolition will take place on Wednesday.

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, and before the question is put on the amendment to the third reading, motion, I would indicate that the leader of the Social Credit Party suggested the proceedings were pursuant to the understanding. It is on that basis that I allowed the third reading motion amendment to be introduced pursuant to standing order.

**Mr. Beaudoin:** Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, we discussed among House leaders Wednesday last, and the agreement was that if amendments appeared on the order paper at that time, votes on them would be deferred until Wednesday or simply cancelled.

The sponsors withdrew them. Namely the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) and the Conservative member that introduced them. But this amendment to defer to three months time the third reading of Bill C-84 was not discussed at the time the House leaders were consulting.