

Supply—Justice

a peril to the moral fibre of a Christian democratic society. I would, therefore, vote for the bill.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William): I wish to say a few words in support of this bill. I have never witnessed a hanging, and I have no desire to see one, but the arguments presented by the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McGee) on a previous occasion and by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) are unassailable when one considers all the aspects of capital punishment and the evolution of our civilization. In this light, consideration of the abolition of the death sentence appears to be reasonable and sensible.

True there are crimes committed by individuals which demand a vengeance to heaven and for which even a death sentence would not suffice, but I honestly believe that life imprisonment in such cases would be more dreadful than the sudden end of life. Be that as it may, the time has come for enlightened nations to consider seriously the abolition of this ancient method of maximum punishment. The "pros" and "cons" will wax warmly. Nevertheless, the time will surely come, if it has not come now, when capital punishment in peacetime will be a thing of the past.

I will not take too much time in going over the reasons why we should seriously consider approving this bill. This is not the first time that eloquent arguments have been presented in support of a change from the punishment of death to a sentence for life. Several hon. members of this house have on occasions made substantial contributions toward the object of this bill. I am merely supporting those valiant warriors whose unselfish interest in this matter should be clear to all concerned. Such an advance as they suggest would not be introducing a precedent for a civilized nation, because there are dozens of countries, including several of the states to the south of us, which abolished the death penalty long ago.

In the report of the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons on capital punishment made in June, 1956 capital punishment is stated to have no unique deterrent effect which would not be accomplished by imprisonment. It was claimed that a considerable proportion of murders are committed in circumstances of sudden passion and that such murders cannot be deterred by threat of the consequences. In contrast, those who carefully plan a murder or a crime such as robbery from which murder results, were alleged to make plans deliberately to avoid detection, and not to be influenced by the threat of the death penalty.

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Moreover, a study of the report would indicate that a good case can be made of the fact that it is morally wrong for the state, as well as for an individual, to take human life. The death penalty is certainly at variance not only with the principles of Christianity but also with the humanitarian and social development of this day and age. In short, it does not appear to be justified as a deterrent and is retained only as a means of revenge. Then, as has already been eloquently pointed out this afternoon by the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Carter), there is always the risk of executing an innocent person.

To those who say that the abolition of capital punishment would prejudice the safety and well-being of the public, I would point out that the experience of those countries which have not had capital punishment for many years is ample proof that such a fear is unfounded.

For all these reasons, may I say, in conclusion, that I am heartily in favour of this bill.

Mr. Stuart Fleming (Okanagan-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, the case in favour of the abolition of capital punishment has been placed before us in arguments so eloquent and persuasive that it is impossible not to be drawn to them and to feel strongly that they are based on firm moral ground. I also think it is as well—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea): Order. It being six o'clock this house will now revert to the business which was interrupted at five o'clock.

SUPPLY

The house again in committee of supply, Mr. Rea in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**Penitentiaries—**

159. Administration of the office of the commissioner of penitentiaries, including \$75,000 for grants to recognized prisoners' aid societies, as may be approved by the treasury board, \$572,678.

It being six o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Chairman, when the debate was interrupted at five o'clock I was reading excerpts from a warden's diary written in 1859 describing atrocities wreaked on prisoners including manacling, chaining, handcuffing and sentencing to a diet of bread