

Amendments Respecting Death Sentence

doing something else under cover. He is wrong in saying that I pleaded the cause of the separatists. The hon. member of Lotbinière is wrong in saying that because I have risen in the house several times to speak against separatism. When I pleaded the cause of two separatist students sentenced to prison, and not for murder, I asked, during the visit of the Queen, that she use her royal prerogative to grant amnesty to those two students who were not accused of murder. The hon. member for Lotbinière therefore did not present the case in its true light. They were two students considered as accessory and, furthermore, minors who had been deluded. I told myself: The royal prerogative might exist. There we had youngsters who had not been accused of murder. They could be rehabilitated, and that is why I rose in the house, and I will do so any time.

In the case of capital murders, as if, for instance, someone deliberately killed the member for Lotbinière because he is against the British crown, and if it were done by the member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill), then I would not intervene, not even to beg the Queen—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tardif): The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Harkness).

Mr. Choquette: May I ask the hon. member another question?

Mr. Rapp: No.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tardif): A moment ago, the member for Lotbinière asked permission to put a question but, in fact, he did not put a question but made a short speech. This time, does he wish to put a question?

[English]

Mr. Choquette: If the hon. member for Three Rivers allows the question it is my right to ask it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tardif): Order. The hon. member for Calgary North has been recognized by the chair.

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in the debate on the abolition of capital punishment just over a year ago I did not expect that the house would be debating the matter again within

such a short time. Actually, I think it is improper to do so in view of the fact that the present parliament is just two years old and the house gave a definite expression of its view on this matter some one and a half years ago. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the majority of the people in this country are opposed to the abolition of capital punishment, as the Registrar General (Mr. Turner) indicated in his remarks and with which view I agree. There are also many very urgent matters which the house should be considering. Therefore for these reasons I think it is a mistake to bring the bill in now, and I deplore the position taken by the government in regard to it.

● (5:20 p.m.)

The Registrar General spoke of the various theories on capital punishment which motivate different people. For example, there is the utilitarian approach, the retributive approach, the humanitarian approach and so on. So far as most people are concerned these approaches are intermingled, but basically my approach to the matter is from the utilitarian point of view.

I commenced my speech a year and a half ago by saying that the basic question we must consider is the protection of the general public. I reiterate that and should like to emphasize it. I do not think there is any question that all other considerations are secondary to the basic one of the protection of the lives of our citizens. Some abolitionists favour abolition on humanitarian grounds, some feel repugnance, which I think we all feel, to hanging a man by judicial process, and some are afraid that there is an infinitesimal chance, as the Registrar General mentioned, that an innocent man might be hanged. Nevertheless, in my view all these considerations are subservient to our main concern, the protection of the ordinary citizens of this country.

One takes for granted that organized society must use sanctions to prevent the murder of its citizens, to prevent their physical injury, the forcible removal of their property or the impairment of their rights to property. Everyone admits that sanctions are necessary to prevent this kind of thing. Some think they are necessary from a punitive point of view, the idea being to take a tooth for a tooth. The great majority—everybody, I believe—think that such sanctions are required to protect the ordinary citizens of the country and they must be continued.

All these factors being taken for granted, and I think the Solicitor General, the Regis-