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MP will make capital punishment an election issue

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Mississauga Member of Parliament Don Blenkarn (PC) intends to make capital punishment an issue in the next Federal election — whenever that is.

"I think the votes on the capital punishment issue reflect the fact that the majority of MPs aren't doing a good enough job representing their constituents. "And that, he says, applies more to the Liberal government than anyone.

"Capital punishment is supposed to be a free vote, party line isn't supposed to enter the picture. But the entire Cabinet voted the same when the amendments were proposed last week."

Mr. Blenkarn was among the members who came out on the short end of second reading amendments proposed by Mrs. Albanie Morin (L. Lous Hebert) and Allan Lawrence (PC, Northumberland-Durham)

Mrs. Morin advocated that the death penalty be mandatory for anyone convicted of rape-murder or the abandonment of a rape victim that led to death. Mr. Lawrence that capital punishment be extended to include hijackers who kill, or those who are convicted twice of any class of murder.

The vote on the first amendment (Mrs. Morin's) was 115-78 against. On the second

amendment the vote was 114-75, also against. Current legislation is a five-year ban on capital punishment, except in cases for those who are convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard.

NO DOUBT

Mr. Blenkarn noted that about 7,000 replies were received in the local survey showing 89 per cent in favor of capital punishment. "This represented an excellent cross-section of Mississauga voters. And the numerous other surveys across Canada show there's not much doubt about the way Canadians feel."

Mr. Blenkarn noted that, in some cases, it was understandable for an MP to vote contrary to the wishes of his constituents.

"I could understand it on a complicated tax measure, for example. That would be something that would require detailed study. An MP could closely examine something like this and reach a conclusion different than that of those who might not have studied, or understood, what the measure involved."

Capital punishment, however, is not the type of measure that falls into the latter category, he says.