

himself with his bed sheets. He may have been one of those of whom the hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Edwards) spoke when he said that most of those condemned to the death penalty would probably prefer to be hanged than to pass their life in the penitentiary. But, I think those are very few in number. Most of those found guilty, if they were given the option between life imprisonment and the scaffold, would choose life imprisonment. I do not propose to take up any more time. The ground has been very well covered by my hon. friend from Montreal, St. Lawrence, who proposed this Bill, and if the Bill goes to a vote I will support it.

Mr. ALPHONSE VERVILLE: Mr. Speaker, I want to state why I am in favour of the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Montreal, St. Lawrence (Mr. Bickerdike), proposing the abolition of the death penalty. I claim that, with the present organization of society, capital punishment should be abolished. Whenever a murder is committed in any part of the country we follow the trial in the newspapers and I have noticed for a good many years past that if it happens that the person accused of the crime has very rich relatives, or a great many friends who possess a certain amount of money, he stands a very good chance of receiving a life sentence instead of being hanged. I will cite one case that comes to my mind. It is the Valleyfield affair that occurred some years ago, when, I believe, three men were killed. I do not know that as yet the murderer of those three men has been hanged. If the accused happens to be a poor man with hardly any person to defend him he stands a good chance of getting the full capital punishment. I believe that society itself is largely responsible for a good many of the murders that are committed in the country. I claim further that capital punishment will create more murderers and rogues. I will explain myself. A family supporting the brand of dishonour imposed upon it by the infliction of the death penalty upon its head, or one of its members, cannot be expected to have a very warm spot in its heart for the society that took the life of father or brother under those conditions. The family will entertain a feeling of bitter animosity against the society that has inflicted such a punishment upon its head. This feeling of animosity is likely to be extended through two or three generations, you may have two or three criminals in succeeding generations, and if

[Mr. Proulx.]

you go back and trace it to its source you will find that this condition originated with the infliction of capital punishment upon a member of the family. It has been stated that there are more murders amongst those who have come from the old land and are now citizens of this country than amongst other classes of the community. Bear in mind that the social conditions in the countries from which these people have come are also responsible for the mentality of the people. We must bear in mind that the mentality of men is developed with the sphere in which they are found. I am strongly in favour of abolishing capital punishment and of doing all in our power to educate men to become better citizens instead of inviting their ill-will towards society which the infliction of this barbarous punishment must produce in the minds and hearts of the family and

10 p.m. descendants of the victims.

There a great many other ways of committing murder than those which are commonly regarded as constituting the crime dealt with in this Bill, and which are not generally regarded as calling for the infliction of capital punishment, but probably this is not the time to discuss that subject in its wider aspect. There are people in this country more responsible for the life of men and women than the person who will take a revolver and kill his fellow-man. We are doing very little towards educating that class of people. I repeat that I am against capital punishment because I believe that society is absolutely responsible for the action of those who commit acts of this kind which the law is designed to prevent.

Hon. FRANK OLIVER (Edmonton): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to have to disagree with so many of my friends on this side of the House on this question. It is a very important question, and because I believe it to be so important I wish to express my opinion in regard to it. I desire, if I may, to speak for those who believe that capital punishment is a necessity of society as at present constituted. Speaking not only for myself but for those who think as I do, I would say that we have just the same belief in the existence of God, in the eternity of the soul and in the mercy of the Saviour as have those who speak against capital punishment. Let me ask the House to look, as my turn of mind causes me to look, not to the murderer but to the victim. My sympathy is with the