

*Divorce*

is absolutely in accord with the teaching of the One who gave us the Sermon on the Mount.

Mr. DUFF: Is my hon. friend in the category of the peacemakers?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I am not suggesting who is in that category.

Mr. McMASTER: Those who fought church union—they are the peacemakers.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Then may I call the attention of the House to this:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment;

I wonder whether that is exactly in conformity with the faith of those who defeated the motion that was introduced for the abolition of capital punishment.

I say unto you, Swear not at all.

Is that to be interpreted literally, as our friends the Quakers do when they refuse to take even legal oaths?

Mr. MARTELL: I rise to a point or order, Mr. Speaker, and call your attention to the rule of the House that theological discussions cannot be engaged in. My hon. friend is preaching a sermon and with the Bible in his hand is endeavouring to show us all our sins and iniquities.

Mr. FORKE: Mr. Speaker, I should like the hon. member for Hants to quote the rule that he is invoking.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote two or three more phrases from this document which has been used by the hon. member for Lotbiniere as the basis on which we should decide the question before the House:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

I ask again, whether our whole system of national defence, our whole system of courts, our whole system of commercialism, are at all in accord with the teaching of this Sermon on the Mount. If they are not—well, I do not want to be the one to do all the judging in this case, but I would suggest that it is hardly fair to ask this House to base its discussion on the authority of a document whose teachings are not generally followed.

The hon. gentleman has suggested further that divorce is essentially immoral in charac-

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

ter. May I remind him?—that the real meaning of the word “immoral” is “that which is against established custom”, and that morality has varied from land to land and from age to age. We are here deciding what will be the established custom for this country, and I have no hesitation in saying that possibly in the working out of the problem we may establish a higher morality than that which has prevailed in the past. After all, what is marriage? Surely, the fundamental basis of it is simply the union of a man and a woman. We have the union of male and female in the lower animals about us. In the case of human beings certain sanctions have been thrown around this union.

Mr. McMASTER: Very properly.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Quite properly, as the hon. member for Brome suggests, because to-day no individual man nor individual woman can entirely disregard the rights of the community and the welfare of the nations as a whole. For a long time these sanctions were closely connected with the authority of the church. I take it that according to the laws of England we are very largely free from the dominance of one particular church, and that we have passed beyond the stage when one particular religious ecclesiastical body can determine what others outside of that communion shall do. In this country it is the state that has decided conditions under which marriage may be undertaken. To no small extent the very institution of marriage rests on certain property rights and adjustments. There is not very much doubt about that, and it is, perhaps, necessary, if we are to have property at all, that certain property rights should be safeguarded in this way. That, I think, can be done even under a system of divorce. It seems to me, personally, that the welfare of the man and woman concerned is of infinitely greater importance than any property considerations that may be involved.

I should like to ask: If divorce is refused, what alternative do we have? Most of us know sufficient about the actual conditions of the world to recognize that very often the alternative is irregular connections of all kinds, and it is an open question, whether from the standpoint of morality it is not better to have things open and aboveboard than to have all sorts of clandestine or illicit arrangements. I quite recognize that an ideal element enters into marriage. Some of my hon. friends who have spoken are inclined to regard marriage as a sacrament. I almost like the word, not in the ecclesiastical sense at