

to this parliament and ask for a divorce on the same grounds as a husband. Mere infidelity would be sufficient to obtain a divorce. There is doubtless an anomaly in the first place in the fact that a woman cannot get a divorce on the same grounds as a man. There is also an anomaly—I admit it—in the fact that the grounds upon which divorce can be secured in this parliament are not the same as the grounds upon which divorce can be secured in the courts. I fully understand the motives which actuate my hon. friend (Mr. Shaw), and I respect them; nevertheless, feeling as I do, and having the opinion which I hold on the matter of divorce, I am sorry that it is impossible for me personally to vote for the proposed measure. If, as I believe, divorce is an evil, I do not think I could conscientiously vote for a measure that would have the effect of making it easier to obtain or to spread the evil more. If one believes that a certain food is a poison, one cannot consistently vote to have the poison distributed more freely or more easily. However this is my own view in the matter. I have risen simply for the purpose of stating what the law is on this subject. The vote I shall give I shall give conscientiously; I cannot support the measure but I fully understand the hon. member's reasons for bringing it forward.

Mr. GOOD: How would the minister propose to remove the existing inconsistencies and inequalities?

Mr. LAPOINTE: Perhaps by accepting the suggestion of the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Beaubien) and restricting relief on one side while not enlarging it on the other.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Would the minister bring in a bill to that effect?

Mr. LAPOINTE: I cannot promise that to my right hon. friend.

Mr. MEIGHEN: What is my hon. friend's duty as Minister of Justice?

Hon. J. B. M. BAXTER (St. John City and Counties of St. John and Albert): I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that every member of the House who does not belong to a communion which feels that divorce is a moral wrong will respect the conscientious belief of those who do, and we could not expect any other action from them. But I see nothing in this bill which imposes divorce upon anybody. No member of at least two great churches which reprehends divorce, who is faithful to his own communion, will seek divorce. If a man or a woman who belongs to a church which forbids divorce seeks the assistance either of this legislature or of any court, for that purpose, that person has something to settle with the

church to which she or he belongs, and that is a spiritual and moral question into which I do not think this parliament would be prepared to enter. With reference to people who belong to churches which tolerate divorce there must be some other attitude to take in public life. After all, divorce for those people is a matter of degree; and I entirely agree with the leader (Mr. Forke) of the party which sits to my left in that I would like to see divorce minimized as greatly as possible. I would not willingly say one word, or take one action in this House or outside of it, which would tend in the direction of divorce. Neither would I nor any other hon. member of this House, ever wish to break up a home. But it is a far cry from breaking up a home to keeping a woman in a lingering hell during the whole of her life, and I am prepared to vote—with safeguards and with proper restrictions—to release a woman from a life which is damnable and which ought not to be inflicted upon her. Take the people from the province of Quebec who do not believe in divorce and whose church forbids it. They can, if they are false to their church, come to this very parliament and, either by abstaining from voting or tacitly consenting, agree to legislation that is exactly in the line of this bill, but without any of the safeguards attaching to this particular measure, because the Senate is not controlled, as far as I am aware, by any particular rule although I think it acts in analogy to the English divorce practice. The hon. member has introduced a measure—

Mr. VIEN: Will not my hon. friend admit that when any divorce bill is brought to this House those of us who do not participate in the debate do not give a "tacit consent" to the measure but give a "tacit dissidence"?

Mr. BAXTER: I have not caught my hon. friend's expression. I freely admit that hon. members who from religious convictions are opposed to divorce sit in this House and feel that they are not participating in it in any way and who would feel themselves touched, perhaps, with moral guilt if they did.

Mr. VIEN: My hon. friend said that we "tacitly consented" to divorce legislation. We never did "tacitly consent", we "tacitly objected".

Mr. BAXTER: There is no objection taken, and I say that no one protests against this legislation.

Mr. VIEN: It is a tacit protest.

Mr. BAXTER: Remarks have come from both sides of the House and from very different angles of Christendom to-day against