

*Private Bills—Divorce*

the motion that we agree or refuse to agree to the second reading of this special act of parliament.

**Mr. Knowles:** May I point out to the Prime Minister that in the case of each of the precedents I cited a particular bill was before the house, but the amendment suggested doing something else before we would agree to the second reading of the bill.

**Mr. McIvor:** I should like to ask the Prime Minister a question. When these bills are sent to the committee, is there an opportunity given to the committee or to any member of the house to examine them?

**Mr. St. Laurent:** The rules of the house are not for interpretation by the Prime Minister, but the rules concerning private bills imply that they are sent to a committee so that the committee can assert to the house whether or not the allegations upon which the application is made are founded in fact. It would be within the powers of the committee to require the attendance of witnesses and the production of papers, or to make any kind of investigation that would enable the committee to say to the house whether or not, in its opinion, the allegations had been established.

**Mr. Fulton:** May I just say a word on the point of order? It occurs to me that there is a striking similarity between the amendment offered on an earlier occasion when a private bill to incorporate a pipe line was being discussed, and the amendment offered on this occasion. Your Honour will recall that under the Pipe Lines Act, there was a provision made by parliament that on subsequent occasions individuals who wished to incorporate a pipe line company would come before parliament requesting an act of incorporation. It was when those individuals, in compliance with that law, made their request and the house was proceeding with the bill based on that request that it was suggested by way of amendment that the bill be not further proceeded with but that the house should then consider the advisability, instead of incorporating pipe line companies, of placing all pipe lines under public ownership.

This suggestion was placed before the house, and the amendment was regarded as being in order. It seems to me it was practically identical in form with the suggestion which is now made. Pursuant to the provisions of the British North America Act certain petitioners have appeared before this parliament, and a bill, in accordance with their petition, has been framed. It has been considered by the Senate and is now before the house. The suggestion here is that instead

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

of proceeding with that bill the house should consider alternative methods of handling this problem of divorce, and this specific divorce, which is exactly the same as saying that instead of proceeding with a pipe line bill we should consider alternative methods of handling pipe lines. I submit that the point made by the member for Winnipeg North Centre as to the earlier amendment having been in order establishes clearly that this amendment is in order under these circumstances.

**Mr. Speaker:** We have before us a motion for second reading of a divorce bill. The amendment is:

That this bill be not now read a second time but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this house further consideration of this bill should be deferred until this house has had an opportunity to discuss alternative methods of dealing with this divorce application.

It has been brought to my attention that similar amendments have been allowed in the past. I have not before me the wording of the similar amendments, but I do not think it was suggested that the wording was exactly the same as the wording of this amendment. In any event, on both occasions which were mentioned, I do not think any objection was made to the regularity of the motion. I do not think I was asked to give a ruling on the motion, so the point of order was not considered. If I am wrong in that respect, I should like to be corrected now.

**Mr. Knowles:** I believe that is so, but the motions were put to a recorded vote.

**Mr. Speaker:** That has no bearing on whether or not the amendment was in order. We did not discuss the regularity of the amendment at that time; therefore I made no ruling. I am not in the difficult position of having to change my ruling.

Amendments to second readings of bills are made under the provisions of citation 657 of Beauchesne's third edition, wherein it states:

It is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a bill, to move as an amendment to the question, a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill,—

This amendment does not come within the scope of those words.

—or expressing opinions as to any circumstances connected with its introduction,—

The amendment does not come within the provision of those words.

—or prosecution; or otherwise opposed to its progress;—

I suppose it might be argued that this amendment is opposed to its progress. I do