

*Divorce Jurisdiction*

Upon reading debates of previous years, one finds that several members are of the opinion that under our legislation it seems that divorces may be too easily obtained. Consequently, many young people get married without giving enough thought to what they are doing. They marry without due consideration, thinking that if things go wrong it will be easy to remedy the situation; people get the idea that they will be able to obtain a divorce easily and start over again. Unfortunately, in several cases, the husband or the wife, and often both of them, have already been married two, three or four times if not more often.

Even then, I say that the passing of this bill would not be justified. On the contrary, I hold that divorces could then be more easily obtained in the provinces concerned.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said in this house that we might be called upon to grant a considerable number of applications for divorce, 250 maybe. As a matter of fact, in the years gone by, applications for divorce which have been granted by us have reached approximately that figure on the average.

On the other hand, according to statistics, in the province of Ontario, for instance, applications for divorce reached 2,400 in a single year. With due allowance for the difference of population between Ontario and Quebec, one can easily imagine what would be the number of applications for divorce in the province of Quebec if we were to pass an act setting up a divorce court in that province.

One must bear in mind that divorce is fatal to the family. The hon. member for Lake St. John (Mr. Gauthier) made this point very clear. We are all agreed that the family is the pillar, the cornerstone of civilization.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to quote a few lines from the collective pastoral letter of Their Excellencies the archbishops and bishops of the civil province of Quebec on the labour problem, under date of February 14, 1950:

Man is born, grows up and is reared in a family, which he leaves only to get married, to give birth and education to other human beings.

It may be that since the last world war young married couples have had many reasons to want a divorce, but the passing of the bill now before us will not provide us with a solution to the problems which beset these unfortunate young couples.

What I have just said is borne out by another excerpt taken from the pastoral letter I have just mentioned. I quote:

[Mr. Dumas.]

During the last war especially, young girls, married women and even mothers were attracted by industrial or business occupations. They found there an opportunity to get their share of prosperity and thus forget the hard times of many years of unemployment. Even after the war, a great many of them have carried on their work, either because they were money-greedy, or because they found it necessary to supplement an all too meagre family income. The results have been a lowering of standards, as far as paternal authority, marital faithfulness, domestic harmony and stability of family principles are concerned; and yet those are the things which have safeguarded our people's integrity and which should always be considered as the basic factor of the prosperity and moral strength of every nation.

If there exists some means to enforce the laws, I am all for it. But within our reach, there is a much more efficient method; I refer to the education of children and young people. When children are very young, their parents assume the easy task of their education; but with the passing of years, they are often left to their own devices. Why should we not demand with some insistence that our educators drill into the minds of our young people the deep meaning and the importance of marriage and of the responsibilities it implies, that is to say to teach them what are the duties of married couples.

Mention has already been made in the house of those clubs which offer courses to those who wish to prepare themselves for matrimony. Those courses are intended for young men and young girls. Such a method of education should be popularized among our young people.

This week, in a church here in Ottawa, I learned that lectures would be given to those who are engaged, in order to teach them the Christian principles of marriage. We must teach these young men and these young women the true meaning of marriage. The calling of the married woman is such a noble one; she must be a good wife and a good mother. The married man plays just as noble a part, for it is he who must protect the family and earn its livelihood.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the way in which the divorce petitions from Quebec and Newfoundland are heard is unpleasant, it is repugnant to a great many people and there are some who assert that it is to be condemned. But that is no reason to replace it with another method which would produce still worse results.

The number of divorces is already too high in these two provinces; we should not contemplate a system which would only increase it.

Never shall Quebec accept the principle of divorce. The mover of the bill and his friends imagine that they have hit upon the right solution; they are convinced that this