

Divorce Bills

a great deal of reference to it, then there would be no alternative but to ask hon. members to vote blindly yes or no. We would be asking them to do that without any indication of what the principle of the bill is, other than saying that the principle is to dissolve a marriage. I am not going to go into the other question whether or not the reasons for the dissolution are correct ones, but it does seem an extremely awkward position in which to place hon. members. Mr. Speaker, I cannot go any further, except once again to say that by following this course of adhering strictly to your reasoning and ruling places us in no other position than to vote blindly yes or no on each bill.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I was in the house on the November 15 when discussions took place about this matter. As I understood the proposition at that time, you attempted to indicate what the principle of the bill was, namely the relief to be provided to such-and-such a person, consisting of the dissolution of their marriage. I think the suggestion was made, or so I understood from the comments both of yourself and the hon. member, that one might look at the evidence taken in the other place in order to obtain information on the question whether or not there had been a marriage. If there had not been a marriage, of course there could be no relief granted; but I do not think it was ever suggested, and I certainly did not get this impression, that we should survey the sufficiency of the evidence and examine whether there was adequate evidence for the purpose. If the evidence taken in the other place was plainly and specifically directed to establishing that there was no marriage, then I think any hon. member could say that he objected and intended to vote against the principle of the bill, because there was no marriage and no relief to be given.

That is an altogether different position from suggesting, as does the hon. member for Skeena, that this gives him or any other hon. member the right *carte blanche*, to examine piece by piece and item by item the evidence taken before the committee of the other place so that in considering the principle of the bill on second reading, we could decide whether or not relief should be granted on the evidence taken before the divorce committee of the other place. If there was no evidence at all to establish the marriage, then I think that is adequate evidence on which to say that we are opposed to the bill; but we should not go into the sufficiency of the evidence, which is a different matter.

Mr. Crestohl: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member who is opposing second reading of the bill, having based himself on some examples

[Mr. Howard.]

he gave to the house, is confusing two things. When we have before the house a bill to change the name of a company—Allstate or any other—that is one matter. But these bills have all been before another committee. That committee has heard all the evidence. It has gone into all the proof which is available to this House of Commons, and the bills are now before us with all that evidence accepted and approved.

Mr. Speaker, I think on the date that the hon. member referred to I raised this question on a point of order, and Your Honour ruled upon it. Because you were generous enough to allow the hon. member to proceed a certain distance and ask certain questions or read certain evidence, I do not think it sets a binding precedent. We raised an objection then and you ruled upon it. We respectfully submit that what the hon. member is trying to do now is something altogether different from the examples he gave in dealing with an insurance company. These bills are before the house complete in all detail, and you are right, Mr. Speaker, when you say that all we can do now is to deal with the principle whether there should be an annulment or a dissolution of the marriage or whether there should not. As you have cited quite properly, I do not think we are in a position to go into all the evidence, as the hon. member suggests. If he wants to go into all the evidence for the sake of giving this house a lot of information it really does not need, and which it already has anyway in print, then I think he is completely out of order.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed, as I nearly always am, by what was said by the hon. member for Peace River. It seems to me that the point that the hon. gentleman made could very well be illustrated by this bill concerning the Merit Insurance Company. When we were discussing that matter I noticed that the hon. member for Skeena did not get up and ask whether there was a Merit Insurance Company, and ask for its marriage or its birth certificate. We all took it for granted that there was such a company.

If the hon. gentleman could bring irrefutable evidence—and I mean irrefutable evidence, not just conjecture or speculation and waffling around among documents—to indicate that one of these petitioners was silly enough to come here and spend his or her money in trying to get a divorce when there was no marriage at all, then I think he would have a real point and we would want to drop the bill then and there. But it does not seem to me that it is reasonable or right, when all we are considering is the principle of a bill, for any hon. member to seek to transgress the rules of the house, or to take up the time