

*Divorce Act*

call the couples for a series of pre-marital lessons or instruction on the nature of marriage. Many marriage counsellors agree that marriage breakdown is not the result of a "falling out of love" but rather that couples encounter very heavy financial obligations. Some young couples want to acquire in one year what it took their parents 30 years to assemble, and within a few months of marriage are more worried about their financial obligations than about the marriage itself. It is not just because the emotional strain is so intense that they start bickering but that the financial strain is great.

My point is that love will never hold an ailing marriage together—love is an emotion and goes up and down. What will keep them together is a commitment to each other. I do not think ministers of the gospel are doing a good job in counselling young people who come to them wanting to be married.

I do not want to talk this bill out, Mr. Speaker, as I should like to see the matter referred to a committee. The health of our society rests upon an understanding of our obligations to each other in marriage, in the home, and to our children. Members deserve an opportunity to explore this subject in committee. I should therefore like to see the bill go to committee where it could be studied thoroughly and sent back to the House with recommendations.

**Mr. Leonard C. Jones (Moncton):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill. I have long experience with divorce and marital problems and it seems to me that a bill of this type is likely to propound the problems by making divorce easier. I know the mover of the motion would like the bill to go to committee, and if I sit down in time that may happen.

From my experience I know many cases are not reported where reconciliation has been possible through the efforts of lawyers. Sections 7 and 8 of the Divorce Act put a heavy responsibility on barristers and solicitors to try to resolve differences between persons who have been living separate and apart or where there is marriage breakdown. Many times people have come to my office—sometimes as many as three families are involved—and later I see them walk up the aisle on Sunday arm in arm. Surely 18 months is not long enough to live separate and apart to determine that there has been marriage breakdown.

The hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen) suggests that perhaps the problem is not marriage breakdown by the fact of a couple living separate and apart but is rather the cause for them living separate and apart. That is the problem we should try to resolve.

I believe this bill is tantamount to divorce on demand and will make marriage a mockery. It would make it too easy to obtain a decree nisi or a decree absolute. The last time the Divorce Act was amended divorce was made easier. I think we should be getting back to the position of trying to strengthen the family unit. There is responsibility on the church and on everyone in society to support the family unit.

It should be pointed out that this amendment has no public support, Mr. Speaker. There has been no hue and cry for this type of legislation. We have so many other problems such as

[Mr. Friesen.]

unemployment and inflation that we should be trying to resolve.

A bill of this kind would not strengthen the family unit but rather would do the opposite. If people live separate and apart for some 500 days it will not necessarily cause the breakdown of marriage. During the war men lived apart from their wives for as much as five years without marriage breakdown.

Statistics have been quoted but none were given for cases where there has been reconciliation and the resolution of problems. Couples sometimes go to marriage counsellors, clergymen, and even to lawyers for help. Even though I am a lawyer I suggest this type of legislation would give lawyers a field day if divorce were so easy after one and a half years of separation.

**Mr. Peters:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, because of the interest shown by members and the fact that all hon. members have not been able to participate, I should like to move that you ask for consent that this bill retain its position on the order paper.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Is it agreed?

**Mr. Jones:** Mr. Speaker, I still have the floor.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. The hour appointed for the consideration of private bills has expired.

Would the House give the Chair permission to go into Committee of the Whole before we adjourn?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### INCOME TAX ACT

#### MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration in committee of Bill C-11, to amend the statute law relating to income tax and to provide other authority for the raising of funds—Mr. Chrétien—Mr. Turner in the chair.

**The Deputy Chairman:** It being six o'clock I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m. this day.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2002)

### AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 8 p.m.