

Private Bills—Divorce

EMILY RITA ROWLANDS SIMPSON

The house in committee on Bill No. 111 for the relief of Emily Rita Rowlands Simpson—Mr. Winkler—Mr. Dion in the chair.

The Chairman: Is it the wish of the committee that these bills should be taken together or separately?

Mr. Knowles: One at a time, and clause by clause.

On section 1—*Marriage dissolved.*

Mr. Knowles: Speaking to clause 1 of this bill I would point out that we started to discuss this bill Tuesday evening, but the sponsor at that time did not have the answers to all the questions put to him. I have looked over the evidence in this case since then, so it is not necessary for me to ask the sponsor further questions; but I do think the committee should take time to consider the nature of the bills we are putting through, and that applies to this Bill No. 111. As I have said on other occasions, if it is the will of the house that we do this job, we should do it in a responsible manner.

My reading of the evidence in this case leads me to feel that Mrs. Simpson is certainly entitled to a divorce from Mr. Simpson. His conduct as spelled out in the evidence is such that I for one would not ask her to continue to live with him or to be married to him. If this bill were to come to a vote I would vote for it; but I must say I am appalled at the nature of the evidence on the basis of which the divorce is granted. I do not intend to go into the details of the evidence, but if I were a lawyer taking a case like this to court I would not hope to get away with it on the evidence on which this case is based.

Mr. McLure: If you had a retaining fee you would try to get away with anything.

Mr. Knowles: I am not a lawyer, but if I were I would not be a lawyer of that type. I suggest to hon. members that they get copies of the evidence in this case and read it, and in particular page 9. I am sure they will agree with me that it looks as though matters had been carefully arranged in order to obtain the evidence of adultery against Mr. Simpson. I have no doubt he was doing a lot of things he should not have done, but this particular piece of evidence does look as though it was arranged. As I say, that is one of the dilemmas we face in dealing with these matters, and that is one of the reasons I feel parliament is not the proper body to deal with these cases. I believe this is a case that should have been dealt with by a court.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Coldwell: As I said the other evening, for a number of years in common with a good many members of this house, I am sure, I have simply refused to spend my time reading the evidence in these dozens and dozens of divorce bills that come before us. In spite of the fact that I have been pretty busy over the past few days, however, I have changed my procedure, and for the first time in a good many years have read the evidence in some of these cases.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre states this is a bill which should be carefully considered before it is passed by this house. It is one of those cases in which investigators or detectives were employed, and where the evidence is given by a couple of detectives. In this case the witness was asked by the clerk of the committee:

Q. What is your name? A. Clarence Melvin Simpson.

Q. What is your age? A. 61.

Q. Where do you live? A. Fonthill, Ontario.

Q. What is your occupation? A. Investigator.

Then the witness was asked by Mr. Harvey:

Q. Mr. Simpson, are you the proprietor of Employers Agency Investigators Limited? A. I am, yes.

Q. You are no relation to the petitioner, are you? A. No.

Q. Or to the respondent? A. Just a coincidence.

Q. Did you have occasion to be employed by Mrs. Simpson to investigate the activities of her husband? A. I did.

Q. Will you look at this photograph and state whether you have seen that subject? A. This is a photograph of a man that Mrs. Simpson identified to me on August 22, in the lobby of the Laurentien hotel as her husband, Mr. Simpson.

By Hon. Mr. Howden:

Q. I presume you mean August, 1950? A. Yes, August, 1950.

By Mr. Harvey:

Q. Did you have occasion to follow this man and ascertain his activities subsequent to that date? A. I did.

Q. Will you tell us what your investigation consisted of and what it revealed?

Then the investigator went on to say that he located Mr. Simpson's car; that he followed the car to a restaurant where Mr. Simpson met a woman, and that they then proceeded to a hotel. I am not going to name the hotel, but it is one of the good hotels in Montreal. Then the story is told of the registration, and how they went up to a room. The detectives put scotch tape on the door and left it there for about three hours. They went back and knocked on the door, and a man put his head out and asked what they wanted. One of the detectives replied: "Oh, I had this room a while ago and I left my raincoat here". Immediately the man tells them to come in and look for the raincoat. When they go in, ostensibly to do so, the witness described what they saw, and on that ground there is an application for divorce.