

Private Bills—Divorce

spirited debate and I believe it has been one of more than passing interest. We have seen some extraordinary things in the course of this debate. I suppose the most extraordinary one has been that of seeing the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) and his principal lieutenant in the house, namely the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) at variance in their approaches to this bill. I shall have something further to say on that subject.

It has been even more extraordinary to find the opposition in this house launched into a debate without knowing how they were going to vote. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, serious members of this house going along into the third day before one of them could indicate how he and his party proposed to vote at the conclusion of the debate? Hon. members will recall that, when the hon. member for Laurier spoke in leading off for the opposition in this debate a fortnight or so ago, at the conclusion of his remarks or, I should say, at the conclusion of his denunciation of the bill, I asked him how he was going to vote upon it and he could not or would not tell me.

On the second day of the debate another frontbencher on the other side of the house, namely the hon. member for Levis (Mr. Bourget), delivered his denunciation of the bill. At the conclusion of his remarks I rose and asked him how he was going to vote upon it and he either could not or would not tell me how he was going to vote upon the bill. It went to the third day of the debate, before the Liberals found out how they were going to vote at the conclusion of the debate.

What an extraordinary performance that was, Mr. Speaker. Near the end of the third day the official opposition decided that after all the denunciations their members had uttered of the bill they were going along lamely to vote for the bill at the conclusion of this debate.

Mr. Speaker: It being five o'clock the house will now proceed to the consideration of private and public bills, the former having precedence, pursuant to section 3 of standing order 15.

PRIVATE BILLS

JEAN BRASGOLD MARTZ

The house in committee on Bill No. SD-43, for the relief of Jean Brasgold Martz—Mr. McCleave—Mr. Rea in the chair.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall these 52 private bills be taken under one item?

Mr. Howard: I would ask that they be taken separately.

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

The Deputy Chairman: The committee will consider Bill No. SD-43.

On clause 1—*Marriage dissolved.*

Mr. Howard: I have a couple of comments to make on the item before us, Mr. Chairman. I would say also briefly to the Minister of Finance, through you, that it is unfortunate to have been obliged to interrupt the start of his discourse on some domestic matters in order to deal with others.

In this particular bill which is now before us we find that in the petition, which is dated September 10, 1958, it is shown that the marriage took place in January of 1938 between the petitioner and the respondent, and that there were two children born of that marriage. Also indicated in the petition are the birthdays of the children and the allegation that adultery had been committed during the past eight years and, in particular, on September 1, 1958. The address and name of the correspondent is also given.

At the outset, before I proceed to discuss whether or not the statements made in the petition have in fact been proved by the evidence, I should like to mention that the hon. member for Halifax in whose name this bill stands is unavoidably absent today, presumably taking part in a somewhat strenuous event in his own province. I imagine that the hon. member for Marquette or the hon. member for Victoria (B.C.) will be taking the place normally occupied by the hon. member for Halifax in piloting these bills through second reading. I might add that in my opinion no finer gentleman could be found to perform this function or, indeed, many other functions relating to the business of parliament.

I am sure that if during the time I am making some comments on the item before us I get off base as it were, or fail to make myself clear, one or other, both of these hon. gentlemen will be quick to point out the error of my ways and draw to the attention of the committee those aspects which they think I may not have interpreted correctly from the evidence before us.

With respect to proving that the marriage did in fact take place, the petitioner appeared before the committee, was sworn, and was asked certain questions by the clerk—the usual questions relating to age, occupation, and so on. Further questions were then asked with regard to the marriage ceremony. The petitioner replied that she was married, giving the name of the person to whom she was married, the date of the marriage, her religious faith and the name of the person who solemnized the marriage which took place in Montreal. She was then shown a document