

Private Bills—Divorce

honest and conscientious belief that under certain conditions divorces are right and produce better results than their denial. On this continent of North America one can doubt whether it is only in cases where there is the conscientious conviction that a divorce is going to be beneficial that divorces are granted. The proportion has become alarmingly great. Under those conditions, when you cannot make a change that is apt to be better than what you are changing from, is it not as well not to attempt a change?

Perhaps I should not have said this on the point of order, but I do urge the point of order in regard to the motion which would deny second reading of the bill.

Mr. Knowles: First may I say that some of us over here appreciate the forthright statement just made by the Prime Minister, even though he was just discussing the point of order. With respect to that point of order, if I may say so with great respect I think he has answered it himself. The Prime Minister doubted that it would be possible for us to do what the motion asks, namely, discuss alternative methods of dealing with these divorce applications. Then he proceeded to do that very thing, to discuss one alternative method, if not two. That is all the motion asks, that this house be given an opportunity to discuss alternative methods of dealing with these divorce applications. As my leader has already pointed out, he is not presenting this motion with any desire to divide the house but rather with a view to having a discussion on the question and a statement from the government. In effect we have had a bit of a statement already by the Prime Minister, and I would hope that after some discussion from various quarters of the house there might be a further statement.

With respect to the point as to whether the motion is in order, I would remind Your Honour that it is based upon the authority of citation 657 of *Beauchesne's* third edition. I need not read the whole citation because it has been put on *Hansard* so often, but it does make it clear that on the motion for second reading of a bill it is possible to move an amendment stating—

—some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principle, policy, or provisions of the bill, or expressing opinions as to any circumstances connected with its introduction, or prosecution . . .

And so on.

On the basis of that citation frequent amendments have been moved to government bills, public bills and private bills along the lines of the amendment now before us. With respect to private bills I would point out that

on two or three occasions similar amendments have been moved to pipe line bills. For example, on November 18, 1949, at page 1979 of *Hansard*, one was moved by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge). On November 25 of the same year, at page 2256 of *Hansard*, one was moved by the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis). I believe I should read the terms of that amendment, because of its similarity to this one. It reads:

That this bill be not now read a second time but that further consideration thereof be deferred until this house has had an opportunity to record its opinion . . .

And then a certain opinion is spelled out. This amendment asks precisely the same thing, that further consideration of this bill be deferred until the house has had an opportunity of entering into a discussion of this matter.

While I am on my feet, and since the question of possible points of order has been drawn to Your Honour's attention, I should like to say that this motion does not refer to the subject matter of a bill standing in my name on the order paper. It stays clear of that. I submit that any discussion of this motion should not involve a discussion of that particular proposal, but that it could involve a discussion of any other proposal that hon. members may have in mind. In fact, I would say that is one of the reasons for presenting the motion in this form. My proposal is contained in a bill which is before the house and the country; opinions have been expressed upon it. There are those who support my proposal and there are some who do not like it. But all agree that we do not like the practice now being followed, so here is an opportunity for members of the house to suggest other methods that might be considered.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that in those terms the amendment is in order. I believe it would be desirable to have a discussion to see what the ideas of hon. members are as to other possible methods, in addition to the alternative methods to which the Prime Minister referred in his remarks.

Mr. St. Laurent: I think the hon. member should distinguish between the precedents he cites and this motion. This motion seeks to defer consideration of this bill until there has been an opportunity to discuss alternative methods dealing with this specific divorce application. This divorce bill arises out of a petition to parliament to grant a special dispensation. It does not involve the setting up of divorce as an institution. The only procedure for dealing with this application is by an act of parliament, and at this stage there is no alternative which can be suggested to