

not by committees of a legislature but by properly constituted courts. I am informed by those from the western province of Alberta that their courts are courts of divorce but that the law which comes from this parliament makes a differentiation between the grounds on which a woman and on which a man may obtain divorce. I say that is unjust; I say it is a crying injustice; I say it is a flagrant injustice; I say it is an injustice which should be remedied by this House in passing this bill.

There are those, Mr. Speaker, who conscientiously are opposed to divorce. It may be part of their religious tenets to be opposed to divorce. I have no quarrel with such. I believe in religious freedom, and in my idea religious freedom not only demands that one should be allowed to practise what he believes to be true but it demands also that he should allow others to practise what they believe to be true. We have striking examples in countries not far away from us of the scourge which a too loose form of divorce may bring about. We are all sensible of the warning which the condition of such nations holds out to us. But I say that it would be unfair for people who hold different views on the question of divorce—views which, perhaps, are held by the majority in their own province—to say that people in another province holding different views should be prevented from having those different views applied fairly. That, it seems to me, is the great point in this case.

If this bill is passed it will not affect the rights of those who pertain to the oldest branch of the Christian church. No one is obliged to appeal to a divorce court; no one who holds contrary religious beliefs is obliged to apply to have his marriage dissolved. The founder of our religion himself gave one ground on which divorce was allowable and surely we are not going to set up a higher morality than the founder of our religion has himself set up. I make this appeal to those who are opposed to the bill. I make the appeal for something I have fought for all my life, and that is for religious freedom and for the harmony which I wish to see exist among the different religions and the different races of this country, a harmony which can only exist if people hold fast to those things which they believe to be true. I ask no one to forego one jot or tittle of his religious conviction, but I do ask that he grant to others the right to disagree with him and to have such legislation as will allow him to

have what he believes to be fair done before the courts of this land.

Mr. HAROLD PUTNAM (Colchester): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of a very few remarks I confess much sympathy, perhaps as respects my vote a controlling sympathy, with the motion put forward by the hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Shaw). I hope that none have offended the religious susceptibilities of others in this debate. Indeed, this parliament ever since confederation has been a great exemplar of the fulfilment of the duty we owe to respect the opinion of our neighbour in matters religious and even in matters political. I cannot accept as an axiom that divorce in itself is an evil, though I sympathize with those whose religious teaching does lead them to that conclusion. If the good resulting from divorce, if the releasing by human agency of couples from positive cruelty and hardship, wherein one is so often innocent—if these benefits outweigh the so-called evil of divorce itself, I could not subscribe to the doctrine that divorce is per se an evil, although there is a body of gentlemen in this House, whose opinion I respect very highly, who do hold that belief. But had I that belief, as the hon. member for Swift Current (Mr. Lewis) professes he has it, I could not see the logic of taking the ground that he does—of supporting the bill now before us—because after all is said and done, viewing the matter most charitably, the result of this bill will be undoubtedly to enlarge the number and scope of divorces in our four western provinces.

Mr. LEWIS: The hon. member will admit that I said that as long as divorce was a state institution I would support equality amongst men and women. That is why I would vote for it.

Mr. PUTNAM: Precisely; I did not misrepresent the hon. member. He made it a basis of his position that he had followed the proceedings in the divorce committee of the Senate, that he had fought divorce in this House and had sometimes succeeded; that he had killed the request for divorce wherever he could. I understood him, therefore, to be absolutely opposed to it. He said, however, that if this evil was to be maintained he wanted equality of cause for dissolving the marriage tie as between the man and the woman. I was unable to see the logic of that, if I should accept his premises.

I do not hope, Mr. Speaker, in my few words to say anything that will be new to any lawyer in the House, but if I can use-