

He said: The amendments which are proposed to be made by this Bill are exceedingly simple and, I think I may venture to say, perfectly unobjectionable. The clause as it now stands which it is proposed to amend provides protection for those who, unfortunately for themselves, have not the mental ability to protect themselves from the injurious usage which they experience at the hands of some men. It protects any female idiot or imbecile woman or girl. In paragraph (b) of section three of the Act it is found necessary that the words "or insane" shall be inserted after the word "imbecile." That is the whole amendment required to the clause, and I presume there is no objection to it. It has been found necessary in Ontario and has been added to their statute during the past session. The other amendment is in the following clause. It simply changes the age of consent on the part of the woman from 18 to 21 years, and in this respect conforms to the expression of opinion in this House last session. The age is fixed at 21 years at which the man may be considered guilty of seducing under promise of marriage. The bill met with no opposition from the Minister of Justice in the other House, and I do not think it would meet with any objection from the leader of this House if he were in his place.

HON. MR. KAULBACH—This Bill, I think, changes the decision at which this House arrived last session.

HON. MR. POWER—No.

HON. MR. KAULBACH—I think the bill we passed last session fixed the age of consent at 18, and the age of the male at 21. This Bill provides that the age of the female shall not be over 18, and that of the male not under 21. I think that the Bill as introduced in the Commons did not go as far as to limit the age of the female to 18, and it was changed to the way in which it comes before us in its subsequent stages, and is less objectionable than it would otherwise have been.

HON. MR. SCOTT—Bills are in circulation which are not corrected

copies. I have not seen the corrected bill. I think it is unfortunate that we should be rushed into discussions on bills of this kind without having proper copies of them before us.

HON. MR. ALLAN—I think some enquiry ought to be made as to the mode of distribution. I have not had a single bill which has been read to-day placed on my table.

HON. MR. SCOTT—I hope that in the future we will not be subjected to this inconvenience. I desire to draw attention to another circumstance. This Bill corrects a revised statute. That statute is the revised Statute of Canada, Cap. 157. On enquiring for that statute I find that we have just one copy in this Chamber and not a single copy in the Library. I desire to refer to the amended statute, and am not able to obtain it. I desire to call the attention of the gentleman whose duty it is to furnish books of that kind that at least six copies of the Revised Statutes should be in the library behind the Speaker's Chair, so that they would be available for the use of members at any moment when called for. It is quite impossible to discuss Bills amending Acts unless we have the original Acts before us. They are all now in a revised shape, and we should have at least six copies in this Chamber.

HON. MR. VIDAL—I experienced the same difficulty as my hon. friend. I cannot find one copy of the Revised Statutes in the Library or any in our own store of books, and had to borrow one from an officer of the House. The more important question to me, however, is which is the correct copy of the Bill before us? The Bill on my table is clear and distinct as I read it.

HON. MR. SCOTT—The majority of the members received the Bill as distributed in the House of Commons before it was there amended.

HON. MR. VIDAL—If that is the case I would prefer to postpone the second reading for another day.

HON. MR. SCOTT—It is not necessary to do so.