

character that would command public respect, that would do justice and meet the requirements of the case.

Mr. JABEL ROBINSON (West Elgin). The only divorce court we have in this country is the Senate, and it seems to me that there ought to be some other court. I am not one of those who would like to see divorce granted as in other places for trifling causes such as incompatibility of temper, but I do not think that the Senate of Canada is the proper place to try these cases. It is deplorable that they should publish the proceedings relating to divorces in the Senate and send the evidence to every member of this House. The most frightful trash I ever read in my life has been put in my hands since I have been a member of parliament. The page boys get hold of this, and all classes of people get hold of it in this city, and I am strongly opposed to this evidence being sent from the Senate and distributed all over the country. It is contaminating—I was going to use a stronger word. I think that the hon. member (Mr. Charlton) has done well in bringing this matter before the House, and if no action is taken on the divorce question itself, I hope something will be done to prevent that filthy evidence being printed by the Senate.

The PRIME MINISTER (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier). My hon. friend from Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) brought a similar motion to the attention of the House on a former occasion.

Mr. CHARLTON. I beg to say that I have never brought in a motion of this kind before. I spoke on the second reading of a divorce Bill, to protest against the existing system, but I have not before brought a motion.

An hon. MEMBER. It was Mr. Britton's Bill.

The PRIME MINISTER. Yes; my hon. friend (Mr. Charlton) expressed the same opinion on that occasion as he did to-day. The House at that time did not endorse his views, and so far as I know, nothing has occurred since to induce the House to change the attitude it took on that occasion. My hon. friend (Mr. Charlton) told us that Canada is the only civilized country which has not a divorce court. To a large extent that assertion is perfectly true, but I do not think it is a blot upon the fair name of Canada, that for the thirty-five years since confederation, no pressing want has been found for a divorce court. For my part I think it is always a grave matter to change, even by way of improvement, the institutions of a country. If the people are satisfied with their institutions it is far better to leave them as they are even though in the eyes of some they may be deficient.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

The PRIME MINISTER. I have no doubt that among many people in this country there is a disposition to believe that Canada, like some other countries, should have a divorce court. This opinion, however, is far from being unanimous, and so far as public opinion has the right to speak and can speak in this matter, none of those evidences by which public opinion does reach parliament have come to us upon the floor of this House. There have been no petitions inviting Canada to establish such a court; there have been no resolutions passed anywhere in the country, except on some occasions by religious bodies of certain denominations who hold strong views upon the subject. But these resolutions are far from being general and far from representing the whole country. Therefore, so long as more is not heard from the public opinion of the country, so long as no general demand is made in favour of such a court, I think Canada ought to be satisfied to leave things as they are at the present time.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

The PRIME MINISTER. It is no discredit to Canada; on the contrary it is to the credit of Canada that there are so few demands for divorce. In Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia there are divorce courts which have existed prior to confederation, and so far as I am aware, the applications for divorce are so few and far between, that the judges of these courts have much of a sinecure. In the remaining provinces divorce must be sought by a private Bill originating in the Senate, and even in that case, I am glad to say, there has been no increase in the number of applications from year to year. The records from confederation to the present day show that the number of applications for divorce has not increased, although the country, I am glad to say, has increased in population and in many other ways. It is a testimony to the good morals of Canada that we are so free from the causes which generally lead to divorce. Public opinion as a rule has not expressed itself in favour of such a reform in our system, if reform it can be called, and I think my hon. friend (Mr. Charlton) ought to be satisfied to let well enough alone. If the time comes—which I would deplore sincerely, and which I believe will never come—when public opinion will move in this matter, and the morals of this country instead of improving would degrade to an extent so as to make the number of applications for divorce more numerous than they are now; then my hon. friend (Mr. Charlton), holding the views which he does, might be justified in coming before parliament. I speak with some diffidence on this question, because I belong to a persuasion which does not permit of divorce; but putting aside that feature of the case altogether, and appealing to those whose views are different upon the ques-