

*Divorce Act*

examine their own conduct and to attempt change within the marriage which would keep the marriage intact and the children under one roof with two parents.

I am sure the abortion law was another example of Parliament's passing social legislation. At the time I recall that there were something in the order of 3,000 abortions a year. Many of those abortions happened in the backrooms of medical quacks and, as a result, women were dying. Clearly we did not want that to be the law of the land. We wanted to change that and make it more reasonable. Yet, as a result of changing it, there are over 70,000 abortions per year. Most people, from a common sense perspective, feel that that is out of line and that again it is easier for people to have an abortion than to carry on and have the child. Once we meddle in one area, we find that we must touch other areas. I do not think that is what we intended and what we want.

Here we are again, 15 years later, addressing the divorce legislation. As earlier speakers have indicated, I hope that we will be wise—if the Bill gets through second reading—and require the committee to travel extensively in order to give Canadians an opportunity to express their views. I am not convinced that many Government backbenchers want this Bill to pass second reading. I know from my discussions with them that they too are receiving an enormous amount of letters from their constituents which indicate that the whole area is out of control and that there should not be any further changes. In my own case, I have received approximately 90 letters from all sorts of groups, as well as from organized lobby groups.

Bill C-10 raises many questions which must be debated and answered. The first one is: Why do four in ten marriages fail? Is it because of the divorce law which was passed in 1969? Is it because of pornography? I think that is a probable factor. Is it because of the abuses in the economic system which have led to massive unemployment? The standard of living in Canada was once second in the western economy. We are now approximately fourteenth. This is a result of an enormous failure on the part of the government of the day to maintain our rate of change. It thought that by creating Crown corporations, by taking over areas which were not competitive on a world-wide scale, and by subsidizing them, we could keep them going. It is true. We did keep them going for an extra 10 years or an extra 15 years, but at an enormous cost. Our standard of living in this country has dropped. As rich as we think we are, we have gone from second to fourteenth in comparison with the other western industrial powers. What a tragedy that is. We are still a small population with vast resources. As well, we are an educated population. If it were not for the fact that governments promise people something for nothing, we could still be number two. We will be number two again after the next election when there is a new Cabinet.

Is the increasing divorce rate the result of urbanization? Perhaps our churches and our social agencies have failed us. I know that my own church, the United Church of Canada, has a high management structure which has advanced to the point where it believes that the institution is much more important than the people who are at the grassroots level. The institution

now believes that it knows what is best for the ordinary people who belong to the church. It does not listen to what the people are saying. It has given up on the salvation of mankind and turned into a political lobby group. It wants to grab political power and forget the salvation of mankind. That is what has happened in the United Church, to the regret of a great number of us. It will affect the membership in the church dramatically. Therefore, I believe that the church has failed us. The highest leadership of the church, as has happened in the past, is out of line.

I am sure that it is failure also at the individual level. Particularly in the last 15 years, there has been a continuous bombardment by government offering us something for nothing. There were all sorts of programs with low taxes because we were borrowing the difference. We had the benefit of those programs. Therefore, we had a lot more disposable income with which to buy big cars, big houses, land and businesses. Now the taxes are starting to match the programs, because you can only borrow so much. Even as a country ultimately you have to balance your books. That is why we are in trouble. So we have failed individually to take on the responsibility because we got sucked into the belief that we could get something for nothing.

● (1630)

I suppose that, rather than looking at why four marriages in ten fail, we should consider it remarkable that six marriages in ten continue in spite of all the enormous pressures which are put upon us as a result of urbanization and changing from an industrial society into an information society. We have just been through an enormous transformation from a rural society into an urban society. We have gone from a collectivity to individuality in terms of individual freedoms and rights, such as the right to free speech, freedom of conscience and the right to go out and do your own thing. That has been one major change in our society. We have gone from the collective factor, which used to control people in the small towns and villages, to an urban setting where people, as a result of the anonymity of the cities, feel an enormous freedom to live the life style they want. However, at the same time we have given up the responsibility of looking after ourselves and our families, which we accepted when we lived in small towns, villages and farms, and have reached a point where we now let the governments do it for us. We look to the government to provide education, daycare and to look after our individual failings. I think that is why four marriages out of ten fail. In fact, I am amazed that more marriages do not fail. Perhaps that is a tribute to the basic stability of Canadians. I think we should find out what makes those six successful marriages in ten work so that we can make appropriate changes. Only then perhaps will the figures show eight successful marriages out of ten or nine successful marriages out of ten.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, there is a loss of a sense of community and a loss of a sense of individual responsibility. People have the attitude that it is easier to get out and start anew with someone else rather than to make the changes within themselves individually and within their family.