

other's best interests and decide to get a divorce. To expect women who find themselves in that situation to all at once establish a new career, to go to university or technical training schools and acquire skills is just ludicrous. These women do not stand a chance at all. It is a cruel joke that the courts are suggesting that women should become self-sufficient.

The Bill dramatically fails in addressing itself to the question of enforcement. As I mentioned before, all too often husbands will skip the province and forget about making maintenance payments. In fact, statistics show that some 70 per cent of court settlements are in arrears. On the one hand we have a Bill which proclaims itself as one which deals with the contemporary problems and concerns of Canadian society. However, when looking at the Bill, one sees what is not included in it and one must realize and admit that the Bill fails to address the real concerns of Canadians who are caught in the situation of marriage breakdown.

This is not an easy topic to deal with. It is difficult for the House to address itself totally to this question. There is a sharing of jurisdictions between family courts, provincial courts and federal courts. Somebody described this as being like a Rubic's cube. Indeed, the present situation does not set the Rubic's cube straight and does not provide a coherent overall policy. Such a policy can only be provided with the co-operation of the provinces. Before this Bill was introduced, there should have been major consultations with the provinces, during the latter part of the 1970s, so that there would have been a coherent policy the Minister could have presented to the House. However, he has failed to do so and in fact has only addressed himself to a small part of the problem.

Like the previous speaker, who is a member of the Conservative Party, I wonder if this is indeed simply a political ploy. If this is the case, the Minister stands condemned and someday, when he faces his maker, he will have to answer to a great many questions. Playing with people's lives for political appearances simply will not work. I for one believe in the notion of karma and karma will get that Minister.

My own experience with divorce is not personal, but some good friends of mine have been suffering through the process of divorce. I can think of one case in particular, Mr. Speaker, and these people are very close to me. There are three young children in this family. Obviously the marriage has not been working for a number of years and finally a decision was reached that someone should make the effort to end the marriage. In order to do that in this particular case the husband took the initiative and entered into what, in terms of court consideration, became an adulterous relationship which then became the grounds for divorce. I think that there would have been a mutual consent between the two parties in terms of a no-fault divorce had this Act been in effect at the time. I think both parties would have agreed that their union was not working out. However, the real bone of contention is the question of property and maintenance costs.

During the divorce trial of the couple to whom I have referred, I heard the judge direct the woman to become self-sufficient. She has three youngsters at home. She does not

have the opportunity to send the children to daycare so she can receive technical training or go back to university to establish a career. In this particular case, one of the youngsters has some learning disabilities and needs some special attention. This woman needs to function as a homemaker for a number of years yet. It will not be easy for her to get a job.

At the same time, it is not an easy situation for the man either. He is a middle-income earner and is all at once faced with maintaining two residences, two cars and double expenditures. A good chunk of his income must go to the woman. At the same time he must maintain himself. Perhaps at some stage, like most Canadians who have divorced, he will remarry and will have obligations to his second family. It is not easy for either party, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this Bill will not help them. This Bill alone cannot solve some of the fundamental problems faced by this young couple.

We need social programs, adequate daycare and income support programs for single parents, and particularly women if they are to be able to provide their children with a good and wholesome environment so that children who come from broken homes can have an equal chance and a secure future in Canadian society. We will need a host of social programs in order to support those families. This Bill does not address those problems and concerns either.

This Bill is lacking a great deal. If it were easier to have Parliament deal with divorce legislation, I do not think that either of the two Opposition Parties would have opposed this Bill. None of us is opposed to the principle of no-fault divorce. However, it took some 16 years to make this change. This Bill is simply not good enough for 16 years of waiting. It simply is not good enough and that is why I believe that both Opposition Parties will stand opposed to this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Debate.

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us this afternoon is important, and it is timely. However, I regret to say, as so many of my colleagues on this side of the House have already said, as an Act of divorce reform it falls far short of the expectations of most Canadians.

The Lincoln County Law Association, of which I have the privilege of being a member, wrote to me saying that after giving the matter serious and extensive consideration they feel very strongly that further changes should be made. We in this House are well aware of the fact that society is anything but static. Society is constantly undergoing change and public opinion moves with that move in society. Parliamentarians who fail to keep in touch with the changing mores of our society do so at their own risk.

● (1740)

As has been mentioned by the previous speaker, the Divorce Act has not been subject to amendment for some 15 or 16 years, although there is no doubt that society has changed in those 15 or 16 years. Divorce and divorce reform must then be given in depth priority consideration.