

established principle of divorce at all. To my mind its principle is to establish equality between men and women in respect to something that already exists and which no one proposes to abolish. Now, I have said that some of the discussion has been beside the point, and to a very slight degree, Mr. Speaker, I am going myself to transgress in order to remove, if possible, some of the confusion that has arisen. Divorce, it has been said, is a social evil. Well, I do not believe that it is. Divorce is the result of the social evil itself and is an effort to remedy it. I have heard only one good reason for opposition to this bill, and that is that members are conscientiously opposed to divorce altogether. If, therefore, the bill is defeated, it will follow that this House is opposed to the institution of divorce; whereupon it logically follows, I submit, that it is the duty of parliament to abolish divorce entirely. I can see no escape from that position. On the other hand, if divorce, as we have had it for many years, is to continue to be recognized on any ground whatever, then surely it is unanswerable that women should have the same rights as men in obtaining this relief.

The suggestion has been made, and it was repeated by the Minister of Railways that the women of the western provinces can come to the Parliament of Canada and have their cases decided on an absolute equality with men. I think the suggestion has been very well answered. If that practice is to continue, then the man in the western provinces who has ground for a divorce can go to his local divorce court which is near at hand, and at very small expense and very little personal inconvenience he can obtain what the woman is obliged to go to Ottawa for, travelling thousands of miles at very heavy expense, an expense which in all probability she is much less able to bear than the man. There is very little chivalry or justice about that.

I do not wish my hon. friend the Minister of Railways to think that I am attacking his argument in particular, but he suggested that if a divorce be granted the parties should not be permitted to marry again. He spoke also of the possibility of a legal separation instead of divorce. That on the face of it may sound very fair, but in the case of a divorce there is always at least one party guilty, and nearly always one party innocent. I cannot for the life of me see why an innocent woman who has conducted herself with absolute propriety, who is blameless, and has very good reason for seeking a divorce, should be prevented from marrying again and having the companionship and what other advantages

pertain to the institution which is endorsed by all—marriage. If marriage is a good thing, then surely it should be possible for innocent people to again enter into it.

Some members have stated that they are not particularly in favour of divorce. I am quite frank in saying that I am in favour of divorce for the one cause for which a divorce is usually granted in this country, that of infidelity. I do not think it is fair, I do not think it is right, I do not think it is in the interests of society that a married couple should be compelled to live together when one has committed the single offence which is the most obnoxious and perhaps the most revolting that he or she can be guilty of. Believing as I do that we should have divorce for the one offence, for me there is no other course than to vote for the bill on the score that women should not be prejudiced in the courts of the western provinces, but should have exactly the same right of redress as men have under similar circumstances.

Mr. H. A. FORTIER (Labelle) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, the bill introduced by the hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Shaw) aims at extending, in the western provinces, the grounds for obtaining divorce. If such was not the case, I am certain it would not be brought down for the consideration of the House. Now, in my opinion, divorce is only the tolerance of an evil which must be avoided as much as possible.

I am opposed to divorce on more than one score. I already had the opportunity, at the last session, when a bill of this nature was under consideration by the House, to put forth the reasons which prompted me to strongly oppose divorce. I shall not again repeat them to-day; however, I shall mention two: I am opposed to divorce because I am a Catholic and because I am a British subject.

I am a Catholic, I belong to that Catholic religion which has Christ for its guiding light and holds divorce in horror. Divorce, is the desecration of a sacrament, the sacrament of marriage, and, had I but that reason to rise in this House, I could say with pride that I have always been opposed to divorce and that each time I am given the opportunity I shall strongly register my protest against this shameless law on behalf of the electors which I have the honour to represent in this House.

As a British subject, as a citizen of this country, it seems to me that I still have cause to oppose divorce. When, in 1867, Confederation was agreed upon, Protestants and Catholics united on a common ground and made conces-