

*Divorce*

the facilities that appertain to men. He says that there is an inequality, that there is an injustice, in that men are allowed divorce on grounds which are denied women. Now, if the only object of the promotor of the bill is to remove that injustice, there is another method which he could pursue; and if he presented to parliament a bill to put that method into effect, I think it would receive unanimous support. Instead of increasing the number of divorces that now obtain, instead of facilitating the means of obtaining divorce and so opening the gate wider to this evil, the hon. gentleman might bring forward a piece of legislation to put women on an equality with men in this matter, not by increasing the grounds on which women may receive divorce but by diminishing the grounds on which men now obtain it. If the object of this legislation is not to open wider the gates to this social evil, let the hon. member do as I suggest and in this way put women on an equal footing with men.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Do I understand the hon. member to say that he would vote for a divorce law which would grant divorce equally to women and men in the western provinces, or anywhere else, on the ground of adultery?

Mr. VIEN: The hon. member does not grasp what I said. If the hon. member for West Calgary will introduce a piece of legislation to reduce the number of reasons for which divorce may be asked by men in the western provinces to the number of reasons which are allowed to women, I shall vote for that legislation, on the ground that it would tend to close the door to divorce, rather than to enlarge the facilities by which divorce may be obtained.

Mr. PUTNAM: Would that not mean in the concrete that the husband could get divorce only on the ground of adultery on the part of the wife, plus proof of cruelty exercised by the wife against him, or plus proof of desertion?

Mr. VIEN: I would vote for such a measure.

Mr. PUTNAM: It would be absurd.

Mr. VIEN: I do not know that it would be absurd. Divorce is a social evil—

Mr. MARCIL (Bonaventure): Does the hon. member not know that he cannot vote for divorce and stay in the Catholic church?

Mr. VIEN: The hon. member does not grasp my remark. My hon. friend (Mr. Putnam) asked me if I would vote for a measure [Mr. Vien.]

which would reduce the grounds on which divorce is now sought. So far as reducing the number of grounds on which divorce may be given is concerned, I am quite willing to vote for a measure that would accomplish this end. The fact of the matter is that I am ready to vote for a measure which would close the door altogether against divorce, but if I cannot obtain that full measure of restriction I am ready to take what I can get towards that end. However, I shall leave for a future occasion the discussion of these canonical questions with my hon. friend (Mr. Marcil).

The social evil of divorce is recognized by all concerned, and the more we can close the door against it the better, I think, we shall serve the greatest interests of our country, the interests of the population at large. I am quite in accord with the hon. gentleman who said that he was willing to grant annulment of marriage in some cases and separation in other cases. But I think it would be in the interests of social welfare to close the door altogether to divorce.

Now, some hon. gentlemen have a great deal of pity for those unfortunate men and women whose marriages are such a failure that they want to separate in order to put an end to their unhappiness. I think it is better that a few persons who have married imprudently should suffer the consequences of their folly rather than encourage hasty marriages by facilitating divorce and so spreading this social evil throughout the country. In our civil law there is the principle of caveat emptor—let the purchaser beware. It seems to me that we should enforce this principle with respect to matrimony; in other words, let those who are contemplating marriage beware.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Ought not that warning to be given equally to husband and to wife?

Mr. VIEN: To both sides of the house.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I would suggest that under present circumstances there is not the same warning given. We are simply seeking to give it to both sides.

Mr. VIEN: I submit, Sir, that if we grant too great facilities to those who have contracted hasty marriages and seek divorce, to that extent we increase the social evil of divorce, and that we would better serve the public interest by leaving a few isolated couples to suffer for their imprudence by refusing them divorce. This evil has become a plague in the United States. If my recol-