

soon rose to about 300 a year, and I said to him, "You must be a lame duck; people apparently think they can get by you very easily". But now, with Senator Roebuck as chairman, the divorces we grant every year are in excess of 400.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: You always said I was too difficult.

Hon. Mr. Haig: Yes, but the public must have thought you were too easy.

I heard one case last session, acting as chairman, but only because Senator Roebuck sent for me and I could not refuse him. I tried to duck out of it, but I could not.

Honourable senators, we have this job to do, but if the House of Commons wants the job I will vote 100 per cent as far as I personally am concerned to let them hear these cases, to be the trial judges, and let us be the appeal judges and do the reviewing after they get through. That is what we are supposed to do in any event, and how they dumped this divorce business on to us I do not know. I suppose the reason was that in the early days it was not a very difficult task.

I am delighted to support the motion of my honourable friend, as I think it meets a real need.

Hon. Arthur W. Roebuck: Honourable senators, may I have the indulgence of the house for just a moment. To begin with I would like to thank the Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Macdonald) and the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) for the expressions of confidence which they have uttered with regard to the Divorce Committee. It is very encouraging indeed and reassuring to find the loyal support of our fellow members when we come back to the house after dealing with difficult questions and making difficult decisions. I also wish to thank very much the three new senators who have consented to join our committee. I hope they will find it not as arduous and not nearly so bad as it looks, because on the committee we have a certain camaraderie and a very pleasant association among ourselves. Difficult questions come before us and we do not always agree, but we settle them ourselves; the house never hears of them. I may give this information to my fellow members who are not of the committee, that every case that we tried last year we decided unanimously. Those in which we had differences of opinion we deferred sometimes for a short time until they could be discussed thoroughly, and in consequence we had no dissenting voice in any decision we made last year.

As Senator Haig has said, we handled a great many cases. He told us the number of cases that went to the Commons, but there

were quite a number of cases that did not get to that house at all. We rejected more cases than the Commons did, by a good margin. The total number of cases that we handled numbered 473. Some we passed over as not being ready to proceed, some were rejected and a very considerable number were granted.

Now, honourable senators, I am pleased to be able to report that this year the number of petitions is down a little. At this time last year there were 326 cases filed and ready to proceed. This session so far there are 257, which represents a reduction of 69 cases at present, and I am rather under the impression that we are going to have a slightly reduced docket this year.

The Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Macdonald) has referred to the reorganization of the committee, to certain changes in its method of handling these cases since I became chairman. Instead of dividing the main committee into two halves, we appoint subcommittees to hear the evidence, and even when the chairman of the main committee is chairman of an evidence-hearing committee it is a subcommittee, and all subcommittees report back to the main committee. Last session we had four subcommittees for a considerable period and three for the remainder of the time, but I think three will probably do the work this year. I hope so. Last year we held a great many sittings. We sat as many as 52 times, not counting subcommittees as separate sittings—the main committee sat 52 times. That is a big docket, but there is a certain satisfaction in handling it, as this is our job. There is no sympathy due to us for doing our work, no sympathy at all.

I quite agree that much of the criticism directed against the Senate and against the divorce committee has been misinformed, some of it atrociously so, but I think we must make up our minds to accept criticism even when it is very unjust, and not to be too much concerned about it, particularly about newspaper criticism. Perhaps it is an indication that we are doing something when we are criticized for the doing of it. The worst thing that could possibly happen is that they should forget we exist.

At the end of last session I thanked the members of the committee, of which I have the honour to be chairman, for their loyal, careful and conscientious work. I thank them for accepting the task again this year, and I direct my thanks particularly to the three newcomers who have joined us in this work.

Hon. Mr. Kinley: What will be the quorum now?