

*Divorce*

have any idea of justice, how we can refuse to endorse the principle contained in the bill.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON (West York): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to approach this question altogether along the lines indicated in some of the speeches. I suppose it is open to us all still to have our own convictions. I am going to hold to mine. And I suppose it is also proper to say that we should not unfairly endeavour to enforce our religious convictions upon anybody else. Personally, I still believe marriage is a sacrament, and I have heard nothing here to-day which changes that belief. On the other hand, I recognize that while that is a moral law obligatory on me, it well may be a moral law which I have no right to force upon somebody else whose sincere religious convictions are different from my own. My feeling on this matter is that our chief concern ought to be as to what is the right thing to do in the interests of the country as a whole and for the good of the Canadian people. I am not now going into the question of divorce on principle one way or the other. I tell you frankly that I am going to vote against the amendment. In the present situation, having regard to society; having regard to civilization such as, unfortunately, it is in some aspects; having regard to custom, which has such far-reaching influences, the custom that has grown up in our midst—having regard to all these things, I do not think it would be right for me to vote for the amendment. At the same time, however, I want to say that in voting against it I am going to take the opportunity of moving another resolution at a later stage. And I shall tell the House now briefly what my views are on the resolution which I shall propose.

First of all, apart from any consideration, moral or other, there should be no discrimination as between one sex and another or one part of the country and some other. The people in the east and the people in the west should be treated alike; everything should be on an equal basis; there should be no favours shown as between man and woman or as between district and district. The thing is so plain as not to need stating. I do not want to quarrel with the act, but I do think that we should not allow any condition to prevail which enables a man to go out and do a wrong merely for the purpose of breaking what he regards as a shackle. And such an opportunity is at present afforded. One eminent judge in England, speaking on this very question some time ago, said that there were innumerable divorces being sought in England at the

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

present time the evidence in connection with which was merely a matter of arrangement between the parties, who go out deliberately and commit sin for the purpose of putting themselves in a position to obtain a divorce. De we want that sort of thing? I am not now speaking from the point of view of any religious tenet or from any religious feeling. I ask, however, is it a good thing for the Canadian home or for civilization at large that what I am still old-fashioned enough to believe is the corner-stone of a nation, the home, should at any time be broken up at anybody's whim without the slightest penalty ensuing? Do we want such a condition to exist in this country? I want to see the innocent protected and the guilty placed where at least it would not pay them to go out and make evidence for the purpose perhaps of ruining some other woman a little later on. That is what I should like to see done, and it is what I think we ought to bring about. And the motion I intend to move later on, after the present amendment is voted upon, is one to the effect that in cases of divorce the innocent may remarry but the guilty shall not be allowed to do so.

Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Minister of Justice): I desire first of all to refer to a newspaper criticism I read, that my hon. friend from West Calgary (Mr. Shaw) had been granted the privilege of moving the third reading of the bill to-day because of the fact that he had agreed to postpone the consideration of it on two occasions when he had the right to do so, and this at the request of the government. It is said that he had been promised that he should be given the opportunity of moving the bill at all its stages, and that is the reason the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) enabled him to bring the matter on to-day. I merely refer to this in passing.

I am going to vote for the amendment. I am opposed to divorce on principle and I am not ashamed to say so; and no compromise on this question can be acceptable to me. I am therefore opposed to the bill for the reason that it would facilitate divorce, while I am in favour of the amendment because I am certain that it would restrict the evil. The argument that women should have equal rights with men is, I admit, a popular argument especially in these times, but I do not admit the soundness of it in this instance. If divorce is a wrong, then no one has a right to commit that wrong; and the argument that men have the privilege to-day of doing a wrong is not a sound reason