

numerable difficulties. I do not think, therefore, that it is necessary for me to refer at greater length to this subject. I feel that what I am saying is within the knowledge of many hon. members who have had far more experience in the courts, and in connection with the administration of criminal justice, than I possess; and holding this view, and with every respect for the intentions of those who are behind the hon. gentleman in this matter. I do not think there is sufficient warrant for the legislation proposed. I therefore move that this Bill be not now read the second time, but that it be read the second time this day six months.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) For my part, I concur in the reasons which the Minister of Justice has given that this House should not assent to the Bill. When the hon. gentleman introduced his Bill some years ago, to make seduction a criminal offence, punishable by this Parliament, he had my sympathy and support. The question of the arbitrary age at which Parliament should make the offence a criminal one is one which aroused much discussion, and the matter was thoroughly threshed out at that time. The principle adopted at that time was that a child below a certain age ought not to be held, in the eyes of the law, responsible in the sense of giving consent, and Parliament fixed the age at sixteen years. We must fix some arbitrary age, although no one can say that it is absolutely correct; but the general consensus of opinion was that sixteen was about the age at which the line should be drawn. Nothing has occurred in the part of the Dominion from which I come to induce me to vote to alter the age. Government should not be tinkering with these laws every year. When we have a law which works fairly well, and the general consensus is that this law is working fairly well, and requires no amendment, we would be taking a leap in the dark and moving in a wrong direction if we altered the age.

Mr. CURRAN. Not only must the arguments presented by the Minister of Justice and the hon. member for Queen's be considered, but it must be remembered that the mover of the Bill has not himself stated that it has come within his knowledge, or within the knowledge of those for whom he is acting, that there is any necessity for changing this law. The Bill is not, therefore, to remove any evil, the existence of which he knows, or is known by any of those with whom he is connected, and without a single complaint or suggestion before the Department of Justice of any sort from any source whatever, either from police magistrates, judges, or Attorney Generals of the provinces, it would be altogether improper to amend a law which has worked well so far.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I do not think it is a very good reason for not adopting the Bill, that it has not been recommended by the judges throughout the land. If we have to wait for legislation until representations have been made by the judges, we shall frequently have to wait a long time. This Bill is in the right direction, and should receive the support of the House, and, for my part, I intend to support it.

Mr. CHARLTON. I suppose the fate of the Bill is a foregone conclusion, as the Minister of Justice and practically the Government have declared against it. I would call the attention of the leader of the House to the fact that he was once a supporter of this proposal in this House, and I can see no reason for his dropping down from the position he then occupied with regard to this measure. The Bill as it left this House was a more stringent measure than it appears on the statute-book to-day. My hon. friend from Queen's (Mr. Davies) says that it is very difficult to tell what limit should be fixed, that the limit of age is an arbitrary limit, and that we may be pretty near the proper limit now and we may not. The object of the Bill is to preserve the morals of the community and to confer a benefit upon Canada by guarding the purity and chastity of the young females of the country, and the age of sixteen was evidently fixed by the Senate because it was thought, if a girl was sixteen years she had sufficient knowledge of the world, and of the wiles of the seducer, to enable her to guard against the consequences that this Bill is calculated to protect her from. I do not believe that such is the case, and I believe that the general consensus of opinion in this country is that the proper limit should not fall short of eighteen years. If it is proper to fix a limit at all, then it is proper to extend that limit of age from sixteen to eighteen years, which this House once believed was correct. So far from there being any evidence that this is unnecessary, we have the evidence of numerous states that have adopted the limit of eighteen years. That limit has been adopted by the great state of New York, upon our borders.

An hon. MEMBER. Any other state?

Mr. CHARLTON. I think it has been adopted by many other states, and if I am correctly informed, it is the limit of age in England.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. No, sixteen years is the limit in England, adopted in 1835.

Mr. CHARLTON. This limit has been adopted in many of the United States, and I might urge for consideration that the age of maturity among females is reached somewhat later in Canada than in the states to the south. I do not believe that our female population, with our society