

## THE SENATE

Thursday, October 31, 1957

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

### DIVORCE

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE

**Hon. Arthur W. Roebuck**, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Divorce, presented the Committee's reports Nos. 12 to 24 and moved that the said reports be taken into consideration at the next sitting.

He said: Honourable senators, may I take advantage of the motion to present some figures as to the progress made by the Committee up to date. I do this from time to time because I believe honourable senators are interested in knowing what is being done by the committee. At the last session of Parliament we disposed of a total of 441 petitions. The number of petitions filed so far this session is 310, or only 31 fewer than we heard and recommended during the whole of last session. The time set for the filing of petitions for the present session will expire on Monday next, November 25, so there is plenty of time between now and that date for the filing of another 31 petitions. In a general way my comment would be that we have just about the same amount of work ahead of us during this session as we did last session.

We have already heard and recommended 40 petitions. The committee has been sitting every morning, five days a week, hearing a full quota of petitions on each occasion. The work of this committee is falling on a very few senators. We can hardly spare the absence of one of our active members, and I hope the time will come very shortly—I trust the Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Haig) is listening to my remarks—when some active members will be added to our committee. There are now some 23 members on the committee but this number includes both the Leader of the Government and the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Macdonald), both of whom are members *ex officio*. They do not attend to the work of the committee, nor are they expected to. There are various reasons why some members of the committee cannot attend regularly. I am not criticizing those who stay away, I am only stating the fact. I repeat that I hope additional members will be appointed to the committee very shortly.

There are 135 petitions ready for hearing, as filed.

Another point which may be of interest is that we have 31 petitions in which notice of contest has been filed. In that connection, may I say that our plan this year is slightly different from that of last year, owing to the public spirit of one of our members, the honourable senator from Toronto-Spadina (Hon. Mr. Croll), who undertook, when I was ill, to take the hearings of contested cases off my hands. The honourable gentleman is a lawyer of long standing at the bar, and is very capable of handling this work. I am grateful to him, as I am sure my fellow colleagues are, for his offer. We will then have four subcommittees hearing these cases. At present the Divorce Committee is sitting daily, but when the other standing committees increase the demand for reporters and clerks, sittings of the Divorce Committee are usually confined to Monday and Friday. The subcommittee for the hearing of contested cases, however, will not be restricted to those days. Some arrangement will be made, I think without much trouble, provided the necessary reporters and clerks are available, for it to sit on other days.

Last session the committee heard and recommended 341 petitions, 3 petitions were rejected, 6 were withdrawn and 91 were undisposed of, making a total of 441.

**Hon. Mr. Macdonald:** May I ask a question?

**Hon. Mr. Roebuck:** Certainly.

**Hon. Mr. Macdonald:** Are the 91 cases which were not heard last session included in the cases which are to be heard this year?

**Hon. Mr. Roebuck:** Some of them are, but not all. For the most part, I think, those cases were not ready for hearing, by reason either of non-payment of the necessary fees or non-compliance with the rules as to filing of documents and advertising. As to those cases that went over to this session, whether they are ready for hearing now or not I do not know. But I am bound to say that last session the committee heard every case that was ready for hearing. I think that point should be very clear: the committee sat last session as long as it was necessary to sit—and that was over a long period of time—to hear all the cases that were ready.

The motion was agreed to.

### MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS

#### FINAL STATEMENT

**Hon. John T. Haig:** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I move, seconded by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Macdonald):

That the final Communique of the Meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers held in London