

Private Bills—Divorce

for Prince Albert has pointed out that probably there may be two points raised by this. There may well be the question of contempt of parliament; but in any event, as the minister said, if the evidence is false it could be perjury. The minister suggested that he did not make the statement that this would be the responsibility of the attorney general of Ontario. I would point out to him he said earlier that since this evidence is given—

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I would hope it will not be necessary for me to point out to the Leader of the Opposition or to the Minister of Justice that if they consider I was in error in ruling that these matters in connection with perjury are out of order they have the right to appeal to the house. I have made the ruling, and I regret I must repeat it, that the question of perjury proceedings and where the jurisdictional responsibility lies and so forth, even in connection with perjury which may have taken place on these bills, or on bills which are not before the committee, is not in order at the present time. We are not even considering the general principle of the bill. We are in committee of the whole on clause 1 of a group of bills which have come to this committee from the miscellaneous private bills committee of this house. They appear in the name of the chairman of that committee, because it is his duty to sponsor them.

An hon. Member: He is not here.

The Deputy Chairman: I must insist that we confine our discussion to the merits or demerits of clause 1 of these individual bills, and that matters of procedure, jurisdiction and so forth, important as they may be, are not in order in the committee stage on clause 1 of these bills.

Mr. McIvor: You are right.

Mr. Knowles: I wonder whether I may ask a question of the Minister of Justice with regard to clause 1 of the four bills, the numbers of which I gave him before? I have tried my best, as you will confirm, Mr. Chairman, to be in order. I refer to Bills Nos. 382, 399, 401 and 407. In view of the statement that I made a few moments ago that persons who gave evidence in connection with these four cases were persons who gave evidence in connection with a case that has been thrown out, would he consider that it might be a good idea for him to look at evidence given by those persons?

Mr. Garson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I apprehend that the function of the Senate committee and of the House of Commons committee which have been set up for this purpose was to deal with this very question

to which my hon. friend refers, and since they have been set up for that purpose I think the proper course for all hon. members is to leave that responsibility, at least in the first instance, with them.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say a word about this. I would point out to the Minister of Justice that there is something in the neighbourhood of 400 of these bills. How can any committee of this house give the proper study to these bills and decide whether they should go through?

Mr. Fahey: Mr. Chairman, may I say a word about this matter. It seems to me we are getting far afield on this question. As a member of the miscellaneous private bills committee, and like several other hon. members who have spoken, I would like to remind the house that we are discussing these particular bills which have been before our committee and which have been recommended to this house for approval. It has been said we had no opportunity to study the evidence. That is not true. Every member received copies of the evidence in each of these cases, and if any particular hon. member did not read that evidence then it is his own fault. The fact is that every one of these bills came before us en bloc and they received unanimous consent of the miscellaneous private bills committee.

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Fahey: Yes.

Mr. Nicholson: Has the hon. member read all the evidence?

Mr. Fahey: Yes, that is exactly why I stand on my feet. I found out, as did every other hon. member, that I did not like the procedure, and I did not like the evidence I have had to read. I suspect there may be collusion in it. But the fact is that I have read the evidence and every member of the committee is supposed to have read the evidence, otherwise they should not have passed them unanimously in the miscellaneous private bills committee. That is all I have to say, Mr. Chairman. These bills are commended by a committee of this house. I am a member of that committee, I have voted for them in committee, and I shall vote for them now.

Mr. Regier: Mr. Chairman, I do not think we are so very far afield at all. We are asked to dissolve some 50 or so marriages. That is set out in clause 1 as I understand the clause, and the reason for the dissolution is the sworn evidence. I am not going back to the integrity of this sworn evidence again on