

or possibly three Committees. I have not attended the meetings of the Committee as regularly this year as I did in the prior seven years. I heard only about 34 divorce cases, and there were over 100. But the Committee has sometimes sat from half-past 10 in the morning until half-past 1, and from 2 o'clock until half-past 6, and then from 8 to 10 at night, in order to clear these cases. It is becoming a very great labour.

These Divorce Bills to which the honourable gentleman refers were passed through this House by very large majorities. They are very conservative measures. They do not enlarge the grounds upon which divorce is granted. On the contrary, they narrow them; because there are no limits to the grounds on which Parliament may grant divorces. But the divorce courts would be confined to the divorce laws existing in England in 1870, and in those laws the grounds for the granting of divorce are well-defined, and, I would say, fairly conservative.

I am very much disappointed that the Bills did not pass the lower House. I have tried to find out why, and, so far as I can understand, what happened was this. When the Bills were sent down to the Commons I asked Mr. Boys to take charge of them there. He was, I think, absent for two or three days, and by the time he was ready to move in the matter—he was perhaps a little off his guard—the time for private members introducing Bills had expired and he would have to get a day from the Government. As I understand, the opponents of divorce in the lower House say: "Why did you not move before it became necessary for you to ask for a day? If you had done that and you had a majority in the House, the Bills would have passed; but now, inasmuch as you have to ask for leave, and as we are opposed on principle to divorce, we are not going to help you out of the hole you have fallen into, and you must get out of it yourself." I do not think very much of that attitude myself; I think it is very technical and very narrow. As a matter of fact, I think there is no doubt that if the Bills came regularly before the House of Commons they would carry by a substantial majority. As I say, the Bills were conservative, and the province of Quebec was left out, the system now followed in that province being left as it is.

The only suggestion that I can make to help us out of the difficulty would be that these Bills should be introduced in the House of Commons on the first or second

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day of next session and dealt with there—either killed or passed. Then, at an early date they should be brought to this House and we should pass them, and the Royal Assent could be given within the first three weeks of the session. If that were done, the petitions that are before the House might be referred to the courts and any fees that had been paid could be handed back.

Hon. Mr. PROUDFOOT: Do we have to pass the Bills again?

Hon. Mr. ROSS: Oh, yes. They are dead now. The whole procedure has to be gone over again. You have to listen to all the speeches over again. But I think that what I suggest would be a way out of the difficulty. If that is not done, then I think we have to change the rules of this House and have at least two Committees, perhaps three; and I think that is very undesirable. The simplest thing of all would be to have the Commons pass the two Bills.

Hon. HEWITT BOSTOCK: Honourable gentlemen, I am glad the honourable member for Middleton has dealt with this question, because I think it is one that we should consider. To treat legislation coming down from this House as the other Chamber has treated these Bills, is not showing proper regard for the Senate. The honourable gentleman (Hon. W. B. Ross) spent a great deal of time and took a great deal of trouble in piloting this legislation through the Senate, and the Senate gave it careful consideration, feeling that they were doing something in the interest of the whole country in endeavouring to place it on the statute book. We have at present no means of knowing whether the House of Commons has any objection to this legislation or not, or why they took no steps to pass it. The only thing that I can suggest to my honourable friend is that, if he is prepared to second me in the matter, we should simply refuse to pass the Supply Bill until that divorce legislation is dealt with. We have the matter in our hands now, and if we desire to bring it to a head we certainly have the power to do so. It would certainly create a little excitement in the House and in the country, and at the same time it would be enforcing our rights and might perhaps lead to better consideration being given in the future to legislation that is sent down from the Senate to the House of Commons.

Hon. W. B. ROSS: Yes. I do not think there is the least sign that the Commons