

*Private Bills*

action along the lines I shall propose. I represent the sponsor for 356 divorce bills from the province of Quebec and the province of Newfoundland. Somebody may have said "shame", but as a Nova Scotian I am not without pride in trying to be of service to fellow Canadians in other provinces.

For four months now, Mr. Speaker, I have tried both in this chamber and in the other chamber, running up and down these stone stairs, to try to get some agreement among people in all parties with different points of view to settle the divorce question, if the divorce question can be settled in parliament without offending the feelings of those in the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland. I think I should immediately make it perfectly plain that while there may be winds of change in the divorce field I have seen evidence of none of those winds of change from the two particular provinces concerned. Distasteful as it may seem to some of us, we do have to consider divorce bills in parliament. After four months of what I consider hard work, I regret that at this moment I am not able to report general agreement on how to alter our present procedure with regard to divorce or, at least, not general agreement to the extent that it will not hurt some people. I think of two people who may feel they are hurt if we adopt the report of the committee on rules and procedure. I would prefer, if possible, to avoid the hard feelings which must accompany even a step which seems as judicial and fair as that. I do not wish to take the time of the house unduly this evening, Mr. Speaker, but my proposal is this. There are 356 cases. The best opinion I have, after consulting everybody who has an interest in this subject, is that between 12 and 15 cases are of the contentious variety. Some of them have been contested in the other place. Some are going to be contested in this place. Others, while they were uncontested in the other place, should be the subject of further examination in the miscellaneous private bills committee of this house. That was obvious after examination by myself, the hon. member for Skeena, the hon. member for Timiskaming and other hon. members. We know the names and numbers of those cases. It would be a simple matter to take those 12 or 15 cases and refer them to the miscellaneous private bills committee.

It is now 20 minutes after nine. We could have that chore done by 9.30 and we could have passed some 340 other cases and carried out a duty owed to the people of the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland. I ask all members of this house to do this humane thing on behalf of those who have petitioned Her Majesty. I ask them to take this course after

[Mr. McCleave.]

consulting their hearts, their minds, and their consciences. This is the only way in which these people can obtain relief. They have petitioned Her Majesty and we are the human agents here who can say: yes, you may have that relief, or, no, you shall not.

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** I am not sure what the request is. Perhaps the hon. member for Halifax would indicate what the request is.

**Mr. McCleave:** Yes. I will make the request very specific so that even the hon. member for Skeena may understand that request. The hon. member for Skeena and the hon. member for Timiskaming have between six and a dozen cases which they wish examined. Let me have the names of those cases. They can bring down their files in five minutes. We can take the dozen cases which have to be examined and all the others can be passed by 9.30.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. member for Halifax, junior or senior, I do not know which, was permitted to make some remarks preliminary to his request and I hope I shall be allowed the same latitude in that regard.

I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Halifax on placing himself in the position of being the defender of rights of people in substitution for a government which is a bit of a jelly fish in this regard, one with no backbone to deal with the matter properly.

Mr. Speaker, the gratification that the hon. member for Halifax oozes all over himself makes me a bit sick because we had discussed this earlier, and the hon. member for Halifax is now double crossing us in the approach that we agreed upon.

**Mr. McCleave:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. There has been no double cross on the part of the member for Halifax or any other member of this house in regard to the matter of divorce. There has been no double cross whatsoever.

**Mr. Howard:** I say there has been a double cross and you are the party in charge of it. I will name the others as well if you wish.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Is it proposed that the house now rise for an interval of time?

**Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the suggestion made by the hon. member for Halifax could be considered by the house now.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member's suggestion would of course require unanimous consent. I take it from what has been said by the hon. member for Skeena that unanimous consent will not be forthcoming.