

to the country. Rather than encourage divorces we should try and find means to prevent them and for that reason, if for no other, I am obliged to vote against the bill.

Mr. A. J. LEWIS (Swift Current): Like the last speaker (Mr. Marcell) I should hate to see the conditions of family life in the United States duplicated in Canada, and if a bill were brought into parliament which would deal with divorce throughout Canada in a general way I might feel called upon to speak of it differently from what I am doing at the present time. The last speaker stated that as a result of the passing of a bill giving equality between the sexes in Great Britain that the number of divorces had increased by six hundred. Very well, let us admit that. Would it not seem to imply that those six hundred women in Great Britain had suffered in silence previously and without being afforded an opportunity of getting relief? The hon. member for Lotbiniere (Mr. Vien) has said that if the existing difficulty in the way of getting a divorce were removed it would increase the divorces in the four western provinces. Let me say that if a measure is introduced into parliament to make it harder for people to get divorces I am quite willing to support it providing it is uniform in its operation. But I have read the statistics of the divorce courts in the various provinces in Canada—those provinces where the women had equal rights with the men in obtaining divorce, and also those provinces where divorce was easier for men than for women—and those statistics do not show that the women folk suffered where there was equality of treatment, the ratio as between men and women was about the same.

The present bill will naturally receive the support of all hon. members who believe in divorce, and from the viewpoint of fair play there seems to be no argument against the contention of its mover. We are all coming to believe in absolute equality as between men and women; and as long as the state continues to grant divorces to the people of the country I see no reason why men and women should not be in a position of absolute equality in respect to divorce. I take that stand not because of any religious belief but from the point of view of good citizenship. As a citizen I object to divorce, I do not believe in it, but the question in my mind is this: Shall we in this parliament make the getting of a divorce easier than is possible at the present time? I have sat on the Private Bills committee of this House for a number of years, and I have listened to the evidence as given in the Senate committee.

I have also read that evidence carefully in order that I might vote in an intelligent way on the question. Hon. gentlemen cannot say to me that I have not objected to the granting of divorces. I have done so in the Private Bills committee. I have fought the granting of divorces, and in some instances have won with the help of my colleagues around me, because I did not believe that they should be granted. At the same time it does seem to me that divorces get through this House sometimes in a very slipshod manner, not that we are altogether lax but we do not take sufficient time to study each case, we are not sufficiently interested in the matter, in order to see whether there are proper grounds for granting the divorce.

Some divorces have been sanctioned by parliament where the man, instead of being given the opportunity to contract another marriage, should be given a sentence and the lash. I believe the time has come when we should respect family life in Canada, when we should treat it as sacred, when people who enter into the marriage contract should realize that it is an agreement for life and should act with a due realization of that fact. If the nature of the marriage obligation was duly brought home to those who enter into it I am convinced they would be more careful in its observance. I repeat that I intend to support the bill because I believe that so long as the country continues to grant divorce both sexes should be on even terms. Some hon. gentlemen have argued that we should make it harder to get a divorce. I would not be opposed to that if the legislation were uniform in its application throughout the country. But as things are such a law would, I think, render it more difficult for western folk to get a divorce than it would the people in the eastern provinces. Because it proposes to introduce equality as between the sexes I shall support this bill although I do not believe in divorce. What I am supporting is the application of the principle of equality; I do not believe there should be any discrimination in this matter in favour of men as against women. Our solidarity as a nation, in my opinion, rests to a great extent upon the maintenance of the family union, and I am sorry to note the facility with which that union has been dissolved in many cases.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Do I understand my hon. friend to argue that the people of Ontario and Quebec will occupy a privileged position, as compared with the people of the western provinces if this bill does not become law? Let me say to him that the people of the