

Statutory Holidays

Mr. McIvor: I do not see anything wrong with the bill, and I see some things in it that are good. I should like to ask the sponsor whether these Monday holidays will be paid holidays. I suppose they will.

Mr. MacDougall: Statutory holidays.

Mr. McIvor: The first of July is a paid holiday. I think it is a good thing for the workers to have Monday holidays. Some people think that workers have too many holidays but those of us who have been through the mill know that is not true. With a Monday holiday a man can attend his place of worship on Sunday where he ought to be, and on Monday can take his family out in his flivver and have a happy time.

Mrs. Fairclough: Mr. Chairman, on the face of it I suppose that most hon. members would feel there was nothing very wrong with this bill. I for one have no objection to prolonging any week end in order that we may have a longer holiday than would normally be the case. Nevertheless I should like to draw two or three things to the attention of the house in our consideration of this measure. First of all Dominion day and Victoria day are the two patriotic holidays that are observed generally right across the country. In many parts of Canada there are observances which have some local significance but I think I am correct in saying they are the only two national holidays observed by everyone right across Canada.

In introducing this measure I hope that the hon. member is not thinking of using it as a step toward moving Christmas day and New Year's day to Monday because they are the only other two holidays left that are of a national character, with the exception of Good Friday. Easter Monday is a traditional holiday. In municipalities where they are observed civic holiday and labour day fall on Mondays, and so on. In some businesses the king's birthday is observed, and the celebration likewise falls on a Monday. Easter Monday is observed mainly by banks and legal houses, but nevertheless there are a number of holidays falling on Monday which provide long week ends for workers.

If we have one shortcoming more than another in this nation I believe it is that we pay too little attention to tradition. I should like to see our educational institutions throughout the length and breadth of this land instilling into our children more and more of the history and tradition of Canada, teaching them what it means to live in our land, what it meant to their forefathers, all of whom, with the exception of the Indians who were here before any of us, came to this country from other lands.

[Mr. Pouliot.]

I should like our children to be taught about the sacrifices made by those of their forefathers who came to this country, who gave up lands and fortunes in pursuit of liberties of one kind or another, political liberty, religious liberty, privileges we enjoy today in Canada and which a great many of us are prone to forget. Among the privileges that we enjoy probably the greatest stem from that historic day which brought to us as a nation a constitution upon which has been built a great and growing tradition. In all sincerity I ask members of the house if they know of any other nation which would transfer the observance of its national birthday to a fixed day in the week. I ask hon. members whether they would like to transfer the observance of their own birthdays, if they do observe them, to some other day.

Mr. Stick: Don't tell us how old you are.

Mrs. Fairclough: It is no secret in this house. Would they like to transfer their birthdays to another given day in the week? To me the observance of July 1 as a national holiday has a great value far and above that of merely having one day's holiday. I think we might very well ask ourselves what is the purpose of this holiday. Is it to have a day off work or is it to commemorate an historic event? If it is merely to have a day off work, put it on any day at all, and in the space of a generation the purpose of the holiday will have been forgotten. I say to you this evening that what we need is not to transfer our holidays to more convenient times so that we may have more leisure but a resurgence of national spirit that will instil into all our young people some sense of the value of the things which they possess. Dominion day and Victoria day are our only national holidays, and I beg you not to treat them lightly.

There is one other point with respect to May 24, Victoria day. In the schools of this country patriotic exercises associated with what is called Empire day are observed on May 23, the day before Victoria day. I feel very strongly that the value of these exercises would be lost completely if they were celebrated on the 23rd of May or the nearest appropriate day and then a number of days elapsed before the celebration of the 24th of May. Suppose the 24th falls on a Thursday or Friday and is to be celebrated on the following Monday. The school children observe their patriotic exercises in their schools on the 23rd of May, have what almost amounts to a half holiday, and then go back to their normal routine until the 24th of May is celebrated some time in the following week. Where is the value attached to such an