

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I thought I had informed my hon. friend that the acceptance of the Senate amendment is not intended to disturb the custom and convention that has existed for something like fifty years.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I am quite ready to accept my right hon. friend's word. I shall never doubt it, but at all events I understood that the amendment of the Senate did what I have stated. I may be wrong, but that is my understanding. If my right hon. friend says that nothing will be changed in the customs and usages acceded to on all sides and intended to create in this capital city a spirit of tolerance and broadmindedness, I am very glad to accept the declaration.

Sir SAM HUGHES: If the Bill passes as the Senate have amended it, what about the civil servants on these holidays? Will they be able to take a holiday or have to go to the office?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: The practice that has been observed in the past will be continued. It has been the practice in the past, I think, to include all the days that are referred to by my hon. friends on the other side of the House. These days will continue to be observed in the future in the way in which they have been observed in the past. The sole purpose accomplished by the Bill, even as amended by the Senate, is to take two of these holidays out of the status of custom and convention and transfer them to the status of law.

Mr. BUREAU: If I understand rightly, there are certain feasts which affect Catholics and which are enumerated in the interpretation clause of the Revised Statutes under the word "holidays." The Prime Minister states that those who profess the Catholic religion hereafter will not be affected by these restrictions which are made in the Civil Service Act. Is my interpretation correct when I say that Epiphany, Ascension Day, All Saints' Day, and the feast of the Immaculate Conception are not included and that it is not intended to enforce upon people who do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church the observance of these feasts, but that those who belong to the Catholic religion shall be at liberty to observe them according to the laws of their church without any deduction of pay if the observance should take any of the time which they ought to give to the public service?

[Mr. Lemieux.]

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I thought I had made myself perfectly plain a great many times.

Mr. BELAND: It is right that my hon. friend (Mr. Bureau) should have the answer because he has put the question more clearly than I did.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I have said two or three times that so far as these days of religious observance, and religious duty are concerned, the whole matter has rested on custom and convention. It would have been far better, I think, if this had not been disturbed by the Senate. The effect of our action is simply to transfer from custom and convention two days which formerly depended solely thereon. These two days are transferred to the list of public holidays which must be observed in the Civil Service as a matter of law. I would have preferred to have had the matter left as it originally was; that is to say, resting upon custom and convention, but hon. gentlemen will understand that we are most anxious to avoid the defeat of this Bill and that there is a possibility, and even a strong probability, that it will be defeated unless we concur in this amendment. I hope hon. gentlemen will accept the assurance on behalf of the Government that this custom and convention which has prevailed in the past will continue in the future.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I would have liked to have had from the right hon. gentleman an expression of opinion on the other amendment excluding the Senate officials from the operation of the Civil Service Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: That has been disposed of.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: We declined to concur.

Mr. LEMIEUX: Very well.

Sir SAM HUGHES: What is the custom in the Quebec legislature—are these holidays observed there?

Mr. BUREAU: Yes.

Sir SAM HUGHES: I would suggest that if there are to be any holidays observed, the "17th of Ireland" and the twelfth of July might very properly be observed.

Mr. LEMIEUX: The motion can pass "on division."

Motion agreed to on division, and Senate amendment read a second time and concurred in. *