

refuse to accept the salary, and I am sure that will prove to be the case, but Parliament grants a salary to Sir George Perley and he should obey the constitutional rule. We are appointing two secretaries, one of whom it is true says he will not accept an emolument, and by a stroke of the pen we enact that they may not return to their electors. My right hon. friend may think I am rash; he may think I am simple; but in my opinion it is one of the precious privileges of the British constitution that no member of the House of Commons can take an office of emolument until he first seeks re-election.

This is a time-honoured practice, and I wish to protest most strenuously against the precedent now created.

Why make this legislation retroactive? It has been the practice of the House to frown upon retroactive legislation, because it is unjust, unfair, and against parliamentary precedent. In this case we are asked to ignore the usual practice. The other day I asked my right hon. friend if Sir George Perley, who is a minister of the Crown, but practically irresponsible to this Parliament, inasmuch as we never see him in the House of Commons, had made any reports, or written any letters, or made any recommendations and the right hon. gentleman answered in the affirmative. I asked that those reports, letters, and recommendations be laid on the table of the House, to this the right hon. gentleman did not make a rash answer, but he made an evasive answer—he would inquire, he would see, he would consider. As this is a new department, it seems to me Parliament is entitled to know the scheme of its organization; the number of its officials, their qualifications, and their jurisdiction. We ought to have a report of this minister, as we have from every responsible minister of the Crown. We are told the Overseas Minister for Militia and Defence has been acting as such since 1916. It is now 1917, and we have no report from Sir George Perley, except the information that he has suppressed the second report of Dr. Bruce. We are entitled to know what have been the activities of the new minister overseas. My right hon. friend should bring before the committee the information asked by my hon. friend from Pictou, and at the same time the information I am now seeking. Meanwhile this clause should stand.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I do not think the matters to which my hon. friend from Rouville (Mr. Lemieux) alludes have any special relevancy to this clause or to any

other. With respect to what he has said in regard to the statute being retroactive, I would like to point out that the English statute I quoted was retroactive in the same sense. It was passed on December 18th, 1916, but inasmuch as some of the ministers had accepted office in the meantime, and would therefore without this statute have vacated their seats in Parliament, it was provided in subsection 3 of section 1:

This Act shall be deemed to have had effect as from the first day of December, 1916.

Because ministers had taken office in the meantime it was necessary to guard against the vacation of their seats, so the Act was made to relate not to the 18th day of December, when it was passed, but to the first day of December.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I am sure the right hon. gentleman will not contend that there is a parity between the two cases. I have no recollection of the Asquith Government having made use of this new legislation, but in the case of the Lloyd George Government I know that the rule, or the practice, or the custom, was suspended, and the ministers were not obliged to seek re-election. Surely my right hon. friend will not say that the condition here is analogous. There was a crisis in England. The whole world was awaiting with anxiety the formation of that new government. For a few hours, or a few days, the affairs of the British Empire were paralyzed on account of that ministerial crisis. It was the climax of one of the greatest parliamentary crises that ever arose in the British Empire, and for that reason the common sense people of England understood perfectly well that they could depart from the time-honoured practice. I will not say there is not a crisis here, because we all know the Government is moving in troubled waters just now. At the same time there is no ministerial crisis in the sense I have just indicated. Sir George Perley has been in England since 1916, acting as Overseas Minister, and nothing to require this legislation has ruffled the surface of political events in Canada. The gentlemen who are to be under-secretaries have been in the House of Commons, and they have had repeated occasions to return to their electors if they were to be recipients of these emoluments. In the British case, it was by reason of a great Imperial crisis, but in this case I am afraid it is only the payment of a political debt. Without in any way disparaging the new appointees, I look around me and see many gentlemen who have been as faithful followers as good fighters, and as