

servance, although there was no such force attached to the observance of these days in the years that have elapsed since Confederation.

Hon. H. S. BELAND (Beauce): May I ask the right hon. gentleman whether should some of the civil servants find it a religious obligation for them to attend church on, say, Epiphany, All Saints' Day, Ascension Day, and Conception Day, they could avail themselves of the privilege to do so?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: They have availed themselves of that privilege during the past fifty years without any statutory provision whatever, and I can assure my hon. friend that it is not the intention of this Government to depart from or to violate in any way the custom that has thus prevailed.

Hon. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX (Maison-neuve-Gaspé): Must I conclude from the remarks of the Prime Minister that the Government concurs in the amendment of the Senate?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Yes.

Mr. LEMIEUX: Well, while I appreciate what has been stated by the Prime Minister, knowing his broad views on religious matters, I cannot but regret that we so to speak consecrate in the law of the land a principle which, up to the present time, has not been considered as part and parcel of our legislation. I am not accustomed to pay compliments to my hon. friend from Frontenac (Mr. Edwards), but I must tender him on this occasion my sincere congratulations on the broad spirit in which the other day he regarded this amendment. It does good at times, Mr. Speaker, to have an Orangeman and a Catholic stand together for the maintenance of a principle involving tolerance and freedom. Now, I appeal to my right hon. friend. He states, and he is right in stating, that since Confederation there has been no impediment imposed by any of the departments of the Government to prevent public officials from attending their religious duties whenever, on certain days, they find themselves under a religious obligation to do so. The British constitution, Mr. Speaker, is made up of precedents, of old usages, and of customs, most of them not embalmed in the Statute Book. That is the spirit of the British constitution. Freedom, as Tennyson says, "broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent," until it has become what we know it as today. Why should we in Canada, not re-

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spect ancient usages and time-honoured customs which have been accepted by both elements of our population, Protestants and Catholics alike? Since Confederation we have had in the office of Prime Minister of Canada Sir John A. Macdonald, the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, Sir John Thompson, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Sir Charles Tupper, Sir John Abbott, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and the present incumbent, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Borden. Never has this question been raised in any way, shape or form. It has been practically admitted that in this capital city of the Dominion, Roman Catholics in the Civil Service could attend religious service on these holidays, and that nobody would take exception to it. I am sure that nobody in this House, whether he be a staunch Orangeman, like the hon. member for Dufferin (Mr. Best), whether he be a Presbyterian, or a Methodist, will take exception to the fact that these religious holidays have been kept. Why should we not accept the precedent which has been created, which has been observed and which has never been challenged—

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Nobody is challenging it.

Mr. LEMIEUX: No, but if we agree to the amendment of the Senate we depart from the custom which has been established. We do away with a time-honoured usage and we may not always have a Prime Minister who is so broad-minded as is the right hon. gentleman. He says that no exception will be taken to the observance of these holidays. Well and good, but still under the amendment of the Senate in which we are asked to concur, these holidays will be done away with.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: No.

Mr. LEMIEUX: That is as I understand it.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: I should like to make it plain to the hon. gentleman. If there was no statutory provision on the subject, matters would go on in this country exactly as they have done for the past fifty years. It would continue to depend upon custom and convention to which my hon. friend has alluded. Now the Senate have given the force of law to a portion of that custom and convention.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I take it that under the amendment of the Senate it is for the future decided that certain religious holidays which have existed by custom since Confederation are abolished.