

passengers were concerned. There was no disease on that steamer as far as I understand. The first and second-class passengers were allowed to land, and were taken to their destination at once.

Mr. REID: Because they had a certificate from the quarantine officer.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I do not blame at all the officer of the Department of Customs. This young gentleman, Mr. Colpitts, who was from New Brunswick, came up and proposed to land also, but it appears that he was not the son of a millionaire or a millionaire himself, that he had been travelling for his education and was coming back as an ordinary steerage passenger. It is evident to me from the statement which has been made that he was not allowed to land because he was a third-class passenger. The quarantine officer may be blameable or not blameable—I do not know and I would not say; in fact we were still in office at the time when this occurred—September 28. I would not say that the officer was wrong, but the evidence is quite plain, the matter is very clear. The quarantine officer would not pass him because he was a steerage passenger, and if there is any disease in the ship it is supposed to be in the steerage and not upon deck. The officer said: You must go to Quebec and pass the examination, and if you pass the examination, you will be allowed to land. This young gentleman was sent to Quebec, he passed the examination and was released immediately. He might go home on the following day. There is no damage, but there was a great deal of inconvenience to this young man because, instead of taking the train to go home at once as he was anxious to do, no doubt, at Rimouski, he had to go to Quebec and from Quebec go back to his home, and he was detained probably twenty-four hours.

Mr. EMMERSON: Thirty-six.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Thirty-six hours, perhaps. The question has been well put by my hon. friend from Westmorland (Mr. Emmerson) in this way: You have a regulation which applies to immigrants, that is passengers who come by the steerage and who are of the class that we know as immigrants, but if a young Canadian, not only a British subject but a resident of Canada, chooses to come back into Canada as a steerage passenger, for reasons which are sufficient to himself, why should he not be allowed the privilege of landing at Rimouski instead of being made subject to the law which would apply to every immi-

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

grant; you can detain these men until they pass the examination, but that does not apply to this young gentleman. That is the only point I see in the matter, and as far as my hon. friend from Westmorland has made out his case, he has made it out in this way: Your law may be wise, there is no blame to be attached to anybody, but at the same time this law, as all laws when they are followed to their extremity, may work an individual injustice. There is no doubt that the operation of this law did work an injustice to this young gentleman in the fact that it compelled him to go to Quebec and prevented him from reaching his home thirty-six hours earlier than he would otherwise have reached it if he had been permitted to disembark at Rimouski. The suggestion made by my hon. friend from Westmorland is whether or not, under such circumstances, the quarantine officer should be instructed to allow an exemption from the laws which would apply to immigrants.

Right Hon. R. L. BORDEN: Mr. Speaker, I was not in the House all the time that this subject has been under discussion, and I am not very conversant with the facts. There is no doubt that the officers, whatever their course may have been, were acting in good faith and doing what they believed to be their duty. The point, as the right hon. gentleman has said, is whether or not there should be some amendment made to the regulation. In the first place, it must be patent that in such circumstances not very much change could be made unless there were some means by which persons returning to Canada as third-class passengers could be readily identified among a great number of such passengers. That seems to me to be the main essential. Perhaps the means for such identification are available at the present time if one saw fit to use them, because it would be possible, I should think, for a person going abroad in that way to get a passport from the proper department of Government here, which would absolutely identify him and upon his return enable the immigration officer to see at once that he was a resident of Canada. If the passenger then had a clean bill of health it would seem to me that he could land at Rimouski if he so desired. I speak thus without any comprehensive knowledge of the conditions, or, of the practice which is followed by the officers in respect to necessary precautions and safeguards. Now that the matter has been brought to the attention of the Government, it will receive consideration by the ministers of the various