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DEBATE ON CUSTOMS REPORT WAS VERY SPIRITED; PREMIER AND HON. MR. MEIGHEN TOOK PART

(Continued From Page One.)

carrying on of the investigation into further fields.

When Mr. King referred to the Woodsworth amendment as non-partisan, Conservative members laughed derisively.

Enormous Problem.

The Prime Minister pointed out that conditions which this country was called upon to face made the suppression of smuggling, especially in liquor and narcotics, extremely difficult. He said that the problem was not alone that of Canada. The United States was confronted with the same problem. Canada had a boundary line of somewhat over 4,000 miles dividing this country from the United States. In addition the Dominion had a large boundary line contiguous to the ocean.

Along the international boundary line, lakes, rivers and almost every other geographical feature were to be found.

Extension of Search Limit.

The United States had a population of 110,000,000, Canada one of nine or ten millions. The Americans were in a position to afford much more liberal means for the prevention of smuggling than was Canada. The United States had found it necessary to increase its preventive service enormously. Mr. King said that when he attended the Imperial conference, one of the subjects which had been discussed was the request of the United States that the right of search of vessels be granted within twelve, instead of three, miles of the coast. Partly through the support of Canada, this right of search within the twelve-mile limit had been granted. The United States had found it necessary to use part of its fleet to assist in the suppression of smuggling. If the United States had found it so hard to suppress smuggling, was it to be wondered at, that Canada was also having a difficult time.

Quotes Premier Baxter.

It also made the detectives of the association preventive officers in order that they could make arrests. Later the Government had taken steps by introducing the legislation designed to facilitate the work of suppression.

On the question of the minister's power of remission of penalties, the Premier reminded the House that the Minister of Customs in the former Conservative cabinet (Hon. J. B. M. Baxter) had defended this right and had said that such power of remission was not likely to be misused by a minister. He (Dr. Baxter) had claimed the right to use his discretion as regards the reduction or remission of penalties.

Taunts Stevens.

Hon. H. H. Stevens, said Mr. King, had tried to show that the Government had full knowledge of irregularities in the administration of the customs department but had taken no action. From the time that the Commercial Protective Association at first submitted to the Government positive charges that smuggling was going on, the Government had co-operated in every way. It had brought in amendments to the Customs Act to remedy this state of affairs. He quoted letters from the association which said that the Government had welcomed its suggestions.

How could the Government be held responsible, asked Mr. King, for a system which had existed since Confederation? How could it be blamed for the fact that the preventive service was handicapped by laws and regulations enacted from time to time?

Met Mr. Sparks.

Premier King declared that the correspondence disclosed that the Government had endeavored to meet the requirements of Mr. Sparks and the Commercial Protective Association. Drastic regulations had been introduced by the Government following representations from the association. Mr. King proceeded to read several communications between the Government and the association prior to the introduction of the amendment to the Customs Act referred to.

Bisaillon's Case.

The Prime Minister defended his position in regard to J. E. A. Bisaillon. Mr. Sparks had urged the dismissal of this officer but it was a departmental matter, and Premier King had assured Mr. Sparks that if charges were made an investigation would follow. Every man of importance in the civil service made enemies. People were coming to him daily demanding that certain officials be dismissed, said Mr. King, but it was hardly the business of the Prime Minister to tell one of his ministers that a man in his department must be dismissed before the charges were even investigated. That was the

position of the Government respecting Bisaillon.

Given Free Hand.

Inspector Duncan was told, said Mr. King, that if he caught anybody smuggling he could "put them in jail and make the report after. We were out to apprehend Bisaillon, and every man who worked with him," the Prime Minister continued.

"No man can go very far in this smuggling business without accomplices. We were out not simply to dismiss one man from the service but to put an end to the whole smuggling business."

Hon. H. H. Stevens asked if this was so why was the power of arrest subsequently taken away from Inspector Knox and his fellows. Premier King replied that he was not aware that the power was taken away.

Told to Bring Charge.

"I went further," said Mr. King. "I told Mr. Sparks time and time again—give me a chance to start an inquiry against Bisaillon and I will appoint a Royal commission to go into the whole matter so that anybody can appear and bring forward their charges."

There was laughter from the Conservative benches at this point. Mr. King continued that he also told Mr. Sparks that if that gentleman was reluctant to make a charge he could let the solicitor for the protective association do it.

"Who dismissed Bisaillon?" asked Mr. King. "The Honorable, the Minister of Customs, who sits here in his seat was the man."

As soon as the interim report was made by Inspector Duncan, the Minister of Customs had brought the matter up at cabinet council, urging Bisaillon's dismissal, and an order-in-council was passed accordingly.

Detective Sent.

In order, however, that all files and every possible piece of information would be secured, a man had been sent to Montreal immediately, armed with the necessary authority, and this detective then and there informed Bisaillon of his dismissal and took charge of the office which Bisaillon had occupied.

Only Party Politics.

While the Government was making every effort to clean up the situation, the member for Vancouver Centre "for the sake of party politics" had made allegations against the Government. So far as the Government was concerned, it had determined to do anything possible to stop the smuggling business. Was the Government to be afforded an opportunity to continue its work.

Premier King spoke of Senator Bureau. "I ask the honorable members if there was a single member of this House who had not the fullest confidence in the integrity of the Hon. Jacques Bureau, while he was in office?" he said.

There were shouts of "Oh, oh!" from the Conservative side.

Praises Bureau.

"That is how brave some members are," declared Premier King, who added that all the time he had known Mr. Bureau as a minister he never knew of an act of his which should be criticized.

"What has come out in the committee is as much a surprise and pain to me as to any one and I am not prepared to believe all the charges that have been made." Some had said that Mr. Bureau got his reward by an appointment to the Senate. He had been ill and his health was failing when the Prime Minister asked for his portfolio and appointed him to the Senate in view of the twenty-five years of public service. Mr. King asked if there was any one in the House who could say that any member had been more respected and better liked than the Hon. Jacques Bureau. Mr. King paused, but there was no reply. "Not one," he said. It had been said that up to the year he left that Mr. Bureau had been a most efficient Minister.

"If the Committee has fallen short in any particular it is in not asking Mr. Bureau to appear before them," he said.

If this government is retained in office it will appoint a judicial tribunal to carry on the investigation commenced by the committee, said the Prime Minister.

Bureau May Go.

"Unless Mr. Bureau gets a clean slate from that tribunal I will ask him to give up his seat in the Senate."

The report of the committee should be concurred in and its work should not be allowed to cease "at a time when it suits honorable gentlemen opposite," Mr. King declared that the Conservatives had centered the whole inquiry in Quebec.

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This statement was greeted with an uproar in the House. Liberals applauded and Conservatives shouted "shame, cheap."

There were other ports in Canada which had not been investigated. "What about Lunenburg?" called out a Conservative.

Mr. King proceeded that there were distilleries which had not been investigated and every one ought to be.

The amendment moved by Mr. Woodsworth was one which Mr. King said he could support.

Premier King paid a high tribute to the work of Mr. Boivin. Until a few days ago nobody had dared to point the finger of accusation at the new Minister of Customs, he said. If that gentleman was to be censured why was not the censure brought on weeks ago when Mr. Boivin was before the committee?

In conclusion, the Premier asked members of the House to remember that they might be themselves in Mr. Boivin's position some day and they should judge as they hoped to be judged.

Hon. Mr. Meighen.

Hon. Arthur Meighen, Conservative leader, spoke of what he described as Mr. King's "labored defence of the administration of the Department of Customs," and particularly of Senator Jacques Bureau. Premier King said that no effort was made to bring Senator Bureau before the committee. Had anybody acquainted with the rules of jurisprudence, asked Mr. Meighen, even heard that it should be the duty of prosecution to see to it that the defence was called? Those who knew Senator Bureau could feel pretty sure that he needed no instruction to appear anywhere if he believed it to be in his interest to do so. Whatever charges were laid against Bureau, nobody could say that he lacked injustice, added Mr. Meighen.

If the Prime Minister's claim that the record of the former minister was immaculate then it was absurd, for the Prime Minister to ask the House to adopt the report.

No Proper Application.

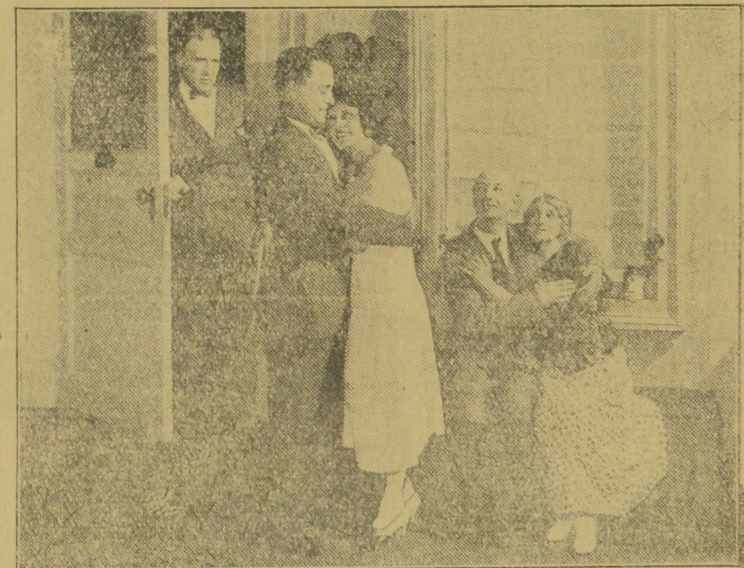
Mr. Meighen observed that in the recommendations of the Commercial Protective Association to the committee, the association expressed the opinion that "the Customs Act, even prior to this amendment of 1925, was sufficiently drastic in its provisions respecting penalties to have enabled the Department of Customs and Excise to cope with the evil of smuggling." On this point he wished to dwell on the fact that Mr. Sparks, in his evidence, had declared that 90 per cent of the smuggling that had been carried on could have been prevented by a proper application of the law on the part of the department.

Treated Leniently.

Mr. Meighen then referred to former Customs Officer Bisaillon. The Prime Minister, he stated, had demanded that specified charges should be made by Mr. Sparks, or the Commercial Protective Association, before he would appoint a Royal Commission to investigate into the conduct of civil servants. Who had ever heard that a civil servant could not be removed except after specific charges had been laid before a Royal Commission? "How many members of the government sitting in front of me," asked Mr. Meighen, "ever appointed a Royal Commission before dismissing a civil servant?" Why had such solicitude been shown for Mr. Bisaillon? The evidence of Inspector Duncan showed that when the present Minister of Customs and Excise had sent Duncan to Montreal to investigate into the conduct of Bisaillon, Mr. Boivin had told Inspector Duncan about the Stevens' resolution to be moved in the House.

It was only after the Government had intimation that Mr. Stevens would move his resolution that action was taken with respect to Bisaillon. Yet, in February and March, 1925, allegation after allegation had been made against this man in letters written by Mr. Sparks.

Mr. Meighen then said he proposed to take up matters concerning the present Minister of Customs, Mr. Boivin. (Continued on Page 4)



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