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STORIES OF SMUGGLING GOODS INTO CANADA TOLD AT OTTAWA; MR. SPARKS AGAIN ON THE STAND

Ottawa, Feb. 23—Stories of the wholesale smuggling of cotton goods and silks, cigarettes and many other commodities, from the United States into Canada, were told at today's sitting of the customs probe.

R. P. Sparks, of the Commercial Protective Association, was again on the stand and testified that "there is no difficulty at all in getting goods across" at widely scattered points on the international boundary.

Smugglers "buy the customs officials first," he said, afterwards changing the word to "help" the customs officials first. It was revealed that the association had made tests by smuggling goods themselves, with the cognizance of the customs department. Cotton goods are smuggled in very large quantities on the Quebec border, especially at Rock Island, asserted Mr. Sparks, adding that the customs officials knew perfectly well that this was so.

Bisaillon Mentioned.

J. E. A. Bisaillon, dismissed inspector of the Montreal district, was mentioned as the inspector at that port at the time chiefly complained of. Silks were smuggled on a large scale at Toronto and Montreal, Toronto being, if anything, the worst point of the two, said Mr. Sparks. Prison-made shirts, smuggled from the United States, came up again, and Mr. Sparks commented that a poster offering a reward of \$1,000 for proof that shirts sold by the Reliance Manufacturing Company, of Chicago, were not made in the Reliance factories, did not provide a reward if it could be proved that men who worked in these factories were state prisoners.

"As a matter of fact they are," he added.

Mr. Sparks repeated his complaints about "ministerial interference" with customs preventive officers, and named Senator Jacques Bureau, former minister, as having intervened in smuggling cases, preventing prosecution of the smugglers.

Further papers in the barge "Them-blay" case the dismissal of J. E. A. Bisaillon from the inspectorship of customs department in Montreal also were demanded.

Sparks Recalled.

R. P. Sparks, of the Commercial Protective Association, was recalled. Cross examined by Mr. Stevens he said that approbation expressed in his correspondence with Premier King of some officers of the Customs Department was intended to refer to officials of the head office of the Department in Ottawa. So far as the prevention of smuggling at border points was concerned, "the whole administration broke down in 1922 and 1923, and is still broken down."

Interference Charged.

"The weakness of the whole system," he said, later, "was ministerial interference with the officers."

After the Commercial Protective Association secured the passage of amendments to the customs act last session, there had been some slight improvement at border points, but since August last there had been "a lapse."

The act, he asserted had "never been enforced."

He thought more discretion in dealing with smugglers should rest with the deputy minister and the chief preventive officers in Ottawa and there should be less scope for interference by the Minister of Customs.

Describing the methods of smuggling fabrics, Mr. Sparks said that the volume of silk smuggled in from the United States was probably greater at Toronto than Montreal, "although it is pretty hard to say that anything is worse than Montreal," he added.

There was also a great deal of smuggling of cigarettes. One express messenger caught with five cartons of cigarettes, admitted that he had been bringing in the same quantity every day for five years.

Officials Helped.

Asked what the custom officials were doing while smuggling was go-

ing on, Mr. Sparks assured—the smugglers buy—they help—the customs officials first.

Mr. Sparks asserted that officials of the customs department knew perfectly well that smuggling was going on particularly at Rock Island, Que. He complained that the minister issued instructions that no action was to be taken without his instructions.

Mr. Stevens: "Do you refer to Mr. Bureau or Mr. Boivin?"

Mr. Sparks: "Mr. Bureau."

Mr. Sparks said that he had furnished the former minister (Mr. Bureau) with the names of a number of firms which were engaged in smuggling.

"Did he prosecute them?" asked Mr. Stevens.

"No. He said that he had discussed the matter with them, and that they had agreed to stop smuggling" was the reply.

Refuses to Prosecute.

Mr. Stevens asked for the names of these firms and Mr. Sparks replied that they were those affected by the seizures in October, 1924.

"The minister refused to prosecute?" pursued Mr. Stevens.

Further seizures had been made in November and December of 1924 and in January and February of 1925 and still there were no prosecutions, Mr. Sparks added.

Taschereau Consulted.

He stated that he had conducted correspondence with the attorney-general of Quebec in regard to the unsatisfactory way in which cases of prosecution for smuggling were handled by the Montreal courts.

"Did you have correspondence with the Premier of Quebec?" asked Mr. Stevens.

"Yes, they are the same. Mr. Taschereau is the prime minister and also the attorney-general."

Mr. Sparks said that he had laid ten specific cases before the Quebec Premier, who had advised him to go back to Ottawa and have the law amended. Mr. Taschereau had agreed that conditions were very unsatisfactory.

"Your idea is that there should be an effort to speed up prosecutions" asked Mr. Stevens.

Courts Called Bad.

"Yes. The Montreal courts are very bad, but we have had experience in Ontario courts which are just as bad. Border magistrates should not be dealing with prosecutions for smuggling."

Mr. Sparks said that magistrates in places along the border were affected by local issues.

Witness expressed the opinion, in answer to questions by Mr. Stevens, that in the Gaunt case, which involved the use of fraudulent invoices, prosecution was not severe enough. Gaunt, he said, had been prosecuted and fined \$500 for having fraudulent invoices in his possession, but he had not been prosecuted for using them, nor had the exchequer been reimbursed for amounts lost because of the use of the invoices.

His Word Questioned.

Mr. Stevens informed Mr. Sparks that his word had been questioned in a telegram received from the Reliance Mfg. Company. The telegram denied the truth of the assertion that this company was dealing in prison-made goods. He asked Mr. Sparks what he had to say about this.

The chairman intervened, however. He said that a representative of the Reliance Manufacturing Company would appear before the committee and would give evidence. Mr. Sparks would have an opportunity to rebut this evidence.

Big Prison Contractor.

Mr. Sparks said that Milton Goodman, head of the Reliance Manufacturing Company, was one of the biggest contractors for prison-made goods in the United States.

Dugald Donahy, of the committee, held up a large poster offering \$1,000 reward for anyone who could prove that the shirts sold by the Reliance Manufacturing Company were not

Its Purity is Absolute

—The flavour irreproachable

"SALADA"

H812

is the choice of millions.

Brown label 75c lb.

Orange Pekoe Blend 85c lb.

made in their own 12 sanitary factories.

"This looks like a chance for you to make some easy money," he said to the witness.

Employees Prisoners.

Mr. Sparks took the poster and glanced at it. Then he pointed out that the reward was offered for proof that the garments in question were not made in the Reliance factories.

"It does not say that the employees in these modern, sanitary factories are not state prisoners," he said, "and, as a matter of fact, they are."

Mr. Sparks gave some details of the methods employed in various states of the union. Sometimes machinery was placed in the penitentiary and the work was done there. In some states the prisoners were taken to shirt factories by the day and made shirts there. Mr. Sparks promised to give the committee later on, a comprehensive statement on the smuggling to Canada of United States prison-made goods.

Liquor Issue Big One.

Asked why the Commercial Protective Association had not taken any steps to deal with liquor smuggling, as well as other smuggling, Mr. Sparks said the association was one of business men engaged in the lines he had indicated. He thought the liquor question was "too big" for him to tackle.

Hon. G. H. Boivin, Minister of Customs, took up the questioning of Mr. Sparks. That gentleman had "broken his rule about private conversations," Mr. Boivin said, and should tell more of what had been discussed between them.

Mr. Sparks assured the minister that nothing he had said was meant to reflect on Mr. Boivin. They had worked in perfect harmony—"until a week ago."

Mr. Boivin demanded that Mr. Sparks tell the committee what had happened a week ago to disturb this harmony.

Mr. Sparks asked if he could repeat conversations he had had with the minister.

Mr. Boivin said he was at liberty to repeat anything. There was nothing to hide.

Refund Was Sought.

Mr. Sparks explained that one of the

reasons why the Commercial Protective Association spent money on investigation of smuggling was that the Department of Customs in 1924 had no special fund for such investigations. Last session \$340,000 had been voted for this purpose, and the association took up with R. R. Farrow, Deputy Minister of Customs, the question of getting a refund of money spent by the association since the beginning of this fiscal year, amounting to \$5,502.

Mr. Sparks' impression was that both the minister and the deputy minister were favorable to the proposal.

Mr. Sparks wrote on February 4 asking if this sum could be refunded. The association would expend it in engaging counsel to conduct its business at the present time, and then it would not be necessary to raise more money for that purpose or to ask the government to pay for counsel "to act on behalf of the business community."

Asks For Chance.

Reference was made to the conversation between Mr. Boivin and Mr. Sparks in Montreal about that time and Mr. Boivin stated that he had at the close of his two hours' interview said:

"Give me a chance, Mr. Sparks. See what I can do. If I can't succeed in doing something, I will get out of my department."

C. P. R. TRAIN SERVICE
VICE BETWEEN OTTAWA
AND FREDERICTON.

The Canadian Pacific Railway will operate a special shopping train on Saturday's only between Ottawa and Fredericton. This new service will be effective on Saturday, February 27th and will continue until further notice.

Train will leave Ottawa at 8.00 A. M. local time, Milville at 9.05 Upper Keswick 9.35 Cardigan 10.10 North Devon 10.55 South Devon 11.00 and will arrive in Fredericton 11.45 A. M. On the return will leave Fredericton 3.15 P. M., South Devon 3.25 North Devon 3.35, Cardigan 4.20, Upper Keswick 4.55, Milville 5.35 and will arrive at Ottawa at 6.35 P. M.

It is expected this service will become very popular, and will be a great convenience to those concerned.

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