

best of his ability, he could assure the House that if there was any laxity at any port he was ignorant of it. It was true that under the old system in Nova Scotia, there was considerable freedom allowed the collectors; that in country towns and villages it was the practice for collectors frequently to allow goods to pass into the hands of merchants without pre-payment of the duties. It was quite possible that this system might to a certain extent have been adopted by some of the officers; but on all those occasions the officer was held to be responsible, and he was not aware of a single case in which a single dollar had been lost to the revenue from any laxity of that kind. If any case could be mentioned, he would be glad to give explanations in respect to it. What he complained of in the statements made by the Finance Minister was that the charges were insinuated rather than made in terms which would enable a member who had occupied the position of Minister of Customs to meet it promptly and deal with it as might be required, and in a manner which he was convinced, would meet the satisfaction of the House.

Hon. Mr. BURPEE said he did not understand his colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, to have charged the member for Cumberland with any neglect of duty while Minister of Customs. It was quite true, however, as his colleague had said, that irregularities did exist while the hon. member for Cumberland was at the head of the Department. They had been revealed by Inspectors, appointed by the present Government, who had been inspecting the offices in the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario, and in some instances the irregularities had been going on since 1868. These irregularities were found to involve a loss in two places of \$16,000, and they had been going on since 1868. It appeared that the collectors had been in the habit of allowing merchants to take goods from ware-houses, steam vessels or cars, without any regard to their being in bond, and without duty being first paid on them. At another place merchants had been allowed to bring goods into the Dominion across a river which formed the boundary between Canada and the United States, and make their returns for the duties at the end of one or two months. Some

*Hon. Mr. Tupper.*

cases of a similar character had also been brought to light in the Upper Provinces. While he mentioned those facts to show that irregularities did exist, and had been discovered by the Government inspectors, he, at the same time, desired to state that every liberty and the benefit of every doubt would always be given to the merchant in case of trouble and difficulty.

It being six o'clock the SPEAKER left the chair.

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AFTER RECESS

The House again went into Committee of Supply, Mr. SCATCHERD in the chair.

The Committee resumed consideration of the item of \$721,520.25, collection of customs.

Mr. KIRKPATRICK said he thought it right to call the attention of the Committee to the amount of \$10,000, to cover appointments, promotions, &c. It was very strange that the Government should ask for a sum of money like this without any statement of its purpose further than that quoted. Hon. gentlemen opposite, when they were in opposition they cried out against the voting of money when its purpose was not clearly specified, and he thought they were justified in doing so. The system was a most reprehensible one, but in this case they could not make use of the *tu quoque* argument and reply that hon. gentlemen on his side of the House had done the same thing when they were in power, for the item appeared in the estimates last year for the first time.

Hon. Mr. BURPEE thought this money had been voted in some way for a considerable number of years, and he knew at any rate that there was likely to be use for it. The estimate for the port of Halifax, for example, would be exceeded he had no doubt, and it was to meet contingencies of this kind that the vote was asked. Of course if it were not needed it would not be used. He might add that it often happened that they had to appoint extra inspectors to go to certain ports of the Dominion, and this item would meet expenses of that kind.

Mr. BOWELL asked if these expenses were not covered by the vote of \$15,000 for contingencies of head office.

Mr. JONES (South Leeds) complained of the small salaries paid the officers at a