

Old Government Made Total Loss on Surplus Of Patriotic Potatoes

Rev. J. B. Daggett, Former Secretary of Agriculture, Tells How They Covered up Loss of \$32,861—Amount Was to be Made Good by the Party—Story of Actual Payment Yet to be Told

An apparently frank revelation of at least a portion of the inside facts relating to the patriotic potato transactions of the former provincial government was made by Rev. J. B. Daggett, then secretary for agriculture, before Commissioner McQueen at the afternoon session of the inquiry yesterday. Mr. Daggett explained that the government sustained a total loss on the shipments of the surplus of upwards of 16,000 barrels which were sent to Cuba. When he informed Hon. J. A. Murray and the late Premier Clarke the latter advised that it would not look well to have the loss made public as some people might think the money had been stolen. He advised that the party should make it up and that the amount be financed through the party. Arrangements for the note were made accordingly. Mr. Daggett could not swear who paid the note.

When the court resumed in the afternoon, Mr. Daggett asked to have part of his moving evidence read over to him before proceeding; this was done.

Continuing with the examination, Mr. Hughes asked how many barrels of potatoes were shipped in owing to the mistake by which Mr. Daggett had explained part of the surplus. Witness thought it would be seven to ten carloads. Decayed, small, barked or otherwise unmerchantable potatoes were turned over to A. C. Smith & Co. to be sold. There was no local market for them. By the time they undertook to sell the surplus merchantable potatoes they had depreciated, turned dark and a certain amount of dry rot had set in. Witness went to Cuba, early in January, he thought, to see what prospects there were for the sale of the surplus. He saw J. C. Manser, the Canadian trade agent, and others. He was there seven or eight days.

Q—"While you were down there did you make any sales?"

A—"We shipped some as a result of my visit and I don't remember whether there was a direct sale or an assignment to J. C. Manser."

Q—"Did Clements sell some?"

A—"Yes, after I came back."

Q—"Did A. C. Smith & Co. sell any?"

A—"Not that I know of."

Q—"Where you in St. John while the potatoes were being loaded for Cuba?"

A—"Yes, I was there while they were being loaded into the schooner Irma Bentley. I was called to the ship by Mr. Elkin through whom we chartered the vessel, on account of barrels in poor order. There were 2,000 barrels of culs; they were rotten. I told Mr. Clements, our inspector for the cargo, the man who sold them, and asked for an explanation. He was surprised, and after tracing it out, found that they had been handled by mistake."

Q—"It was just by good fortune these few bad barrels were discovered?"

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Heal Two Weeks Old Baby Of Skin Trouble.

"When about two weeks old my baby turned blue, and in a couple of days broke out in a rash. Then she turned sore around her ears and on the top of her head, and on her arms and legs. The skin was red and she scratched till she made it bleed. She could not sleep."

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appeared in the returns made by Clements to the department of the number of barrels shipped.

Q—"Who paid the charges?"

A—"And you paid brokerage charges on the number of barrels shipped?"

Q—"On the barrels shipped by Mr. Boyer?"

A—"The amount is about half of that charged on the other vessel and I take it that the balance of the shipping charges were paid by Mr. Boyer."

Q—"Did you get any return from Cuba for any of the shipments?"

A—"I don't know anything about it; I do not remember any of the details."

No Returns.

Q—"But you understand that there were practically no returns?"

A—"That is my understanding, but I don't know the only one who can answer that."

A statement produced by Mr. Hughes was read to the court. It was a statement of the fact that Mr. Hughes had been asked to make up the loss of the potatoes, and that he had done so.

Q—"How many barrels did Mr. Clements return show as shipped to Cuba?"

A—"I think I was informed by Mr. Smith that there were some returns, but they did not amount to much."

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The Inside Facts.

A—"I would like to answer that in my own way. When the transaction was closed up, I laid it before the minister of agriculture, Hon. Mr. Murray, and also the premier, Hon. Mr. Clarke, with whom I had several conversations. Mr. Clarke's first idea was to show the loss, but later on, when I saw him on the train, he called me over and said that he had thought it over and had changed his mind. He said he was sorry that the loss had occurred, as some people might not understand it and might say that the money had been stolen. He said, 'I think we should make it up.'"

Q—"Who should make it up?"

A—"I took it that he meant the party. I told the premier that if that was done, as I felt partly responsible, I would be glad to contribute. He asked me if I thought that arrangements could be made to finance the loss. I told him that I thought it could be done. I told Hon. Mr. Murray about this conversation and later I saw H. C. Smith of A. C. Smith & Co. I don't remember who made the suggestion first, but he gave me the note and I took it to the finance department."

Q—"Do you remember the date?"

A—"No, I made no special memorandum of it. Mr. Smith gave me the note and I handed it to the deputy provincial treasurer. I told him the facts, that it was a loss and that it was made up. Some months later the deputy provincial treasurer handed the note back to me and it was paid. I handed it back to Mr. Smith."

Q—"And who paid the note?"

A—"I heard, but I do not know."

Q—"Did you contribute?"

A—"I was not asked to."

Q—"So far as you know, A. C. Smith & Co. made no returns for the shipments to Cuba?"

A—"So far as I know. They said the returns were taken up by the costs."

Q—"At the following session of the legislature, you appeared before the public accounts committee and you made no such statement as this?"

A—"They never asked me."

Q—"The statement given to the public was not the correct one?"

A—"It was correct, except the details. I noticed a statement in the papers by J. C. Manser saying that neither he nor the others received any potatoes. I can show the record of contracts with those men at the prices mentioned. I went to Cuba, at no expense to the government, to investigate and I found out all about it. The bill of lading was delayed and the shipment, which was to be of 16,000 barrels, was not released. The potatoes lay in the blasing sun until they were ruined. They were thrown on the dump."

Q—"About the rate; was it paid by A. C. Smith & Co.?"

A—"Not that I know of, but I do not know if they did or not."

Q—"Not that I know of, but I do not know if they did or not."

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prisoners have been taken and the aggregate now greatly exceeds the 25,000 officially reported. The Germans, even though the weather conditions preclude infantry activity, are fearful that the Americans anticipate a further attack is indicated by the almost continuous bombardment of the American positions with heavy guns along the Lorraine front.

Q—"Here is a lot of 250 barrels from A. C. Smith & Co. at eight cents."

A—"That may have been some they had on hand."

Q—"The government paid eighty cents but when they settled up the loss it was at \$1.30."

A—"Yes."

Q—"When you made up this account you took it to Hon. Mr. Murray and showed it to him?"

A—"Yes."

Q—"When you got the note, you took it to Mr. Murray?"

A—"Yes, it would be a natural thing to do; I suppose I did."

Q—"He knew all about it?"

A—"And Premier Clarke did?"

A—"Yes."

Q—"And the other members of the administration?"

A—"I did not mention it to any others."

Q—"Did you have anything to do with returning the note?"

A—"I did not recollect that it was renewed."

Q—"You knew about the provincial books being kept open until this settlement was made?"

A—"Yes, I heard about it; I don't know."

Q—"They were kept open until this note was received?"

A—"Yes."

At the time for adjournment Mr. Daggett explained that he was anxious to return to Fredericton and asked if his examination could be resumed at some other time. Mr. Hughes assented and promised to have other witnesses on hand when the court resumes at 10.30 o'clock this morning.

War Summary

New York, Sept. 24.—The Associated Press, tonight, issued the following:

In both Macedonia and Palestine the Entente Allied forces are giving the already badly beaten Bulgarians, Germans and Turks no rest, while in France the British and French are continuing to draw their net more closely about St. Quentin and the remaining elements of the Hindenburg line in this immediate region.

In Macedonia the situation of the Bulgarians and Germans daily grows more critical as the Allied forces steadily maintain their pressure against them. In Turkey the latest operations of the British and Arab tribesmen friendly to the Allied cause seem to forecast the complete destruction or capture of the Ottoman troops in Palestine on both sides of the River Jordan.

St. Quentin, through the latest advice of the British and French, is still but enveloped and to the north the strong enemy line protecting Cambrai has been further encroached upon by Field Marshal Haig's men.

In Palestine the British on the coast have taken the important town of Haifa and Acre, while east of the Jordan the Turks are everywhere in retreat, hard pressed by the British and the tribesmen of the King of the Hejaz.

Inside the big sack, the neck of which was sewen up by the British in their initial drive, many more

Q—"The instructions you gave your agents were to pay \$1 a barrel to the farmer?"

A—"Yes."

Q—"Was it paid?"

A—"So far as I know."

Q—"Were there any exceptions?"

A—"I cannot say."

Q—"We have here a lot charged at ninety-five cents?"

A—"Yes."

Q—"I should not be surprised if it was."

Q—"Smith was your agent?"

A—"The department's agent."

Q—"They were not to blame for the loss?"

A—"No."

Q—"Then why did they give a note for this amount?"

A—"They gave a note for the amount due, after deducting the actual loss."

Q—"It seems to have been a total loss."

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