

I have had a long and intimate knowledge of the Minister of Customs. I can remember in the old days when for twenty years in the county of Brant the rafters rang with denunciations by the Minister of Customs of the Sir John Macdonald government as a government of graft and a government of misappropriation. In these days the Minister of Customs held up high ideals to the people of Brant, but little did they think, and probably little did he himself think then, that for ten years he would be sitting in a government and condoning offences before which any scandals that attached to the Conservative government were infinitesimal. I say that the scandals that have been associated with the government of which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Paterson) is a minister are like mountains to small hills as compared with the Conservative government, and yet for ten years the Minister of Customs has backed up the various iniquities of the Liberal government in a manner that his best friends never dreamed he would be guilty of. I will not say the hon. gentleman has done that from lack of principle but he certainly has done it because of his partisanship which has so blinded him that he can see no wrong done by his friends and his supporters. Let me give you an instance. Three or four weeks ago he was asked by the member for Simcoe: What about the steals, and the Minister of Customs answered: I know of no steals. And yet, twenty-four hours before that the hon. gentleman had admitted to me that his collector of customs at Huntington, British Columbia, had defaulted to the extent of \$2,400. I made a criticism then of the action of the Minister of Customs and I pointed out to him that it was common report on the streets that his collector had not returned to the department nearly the amount of money that he had taken from it unlawfully. I see by 'Hansard' that the Minister of Customs stated that immediately after I made that statement in the House he despatched another inspector to discharge the duty that the former inspector had failed to do and as a result about \$6,000 more had been returned to the coffers of the country. I do not believe that we have yet got at the true inwardness of this case, and before this debate is finished I hope our good friend from Westminster (Mr. Kennedy) who won his spurs as a candid friend of the government on the Japanese treaty, will tell us the truth about the defalcation of this British Columbia customs collector as he knows it. He is on the ground; I have not been within 3,000 miles of the place, but nevertheless I was able to get the information which led to the restitution of thousands of dollars to the treasury of Canada. There was a compromise made with this collector of customs at Huntington and he returned some of the misappropriated funds but unfortunately for

Mr. COCKSHUTT.

himself he was not satisfied to keep quiet and he boasted on the streets of his town that he was many thousands of dollars ahead of the government. The information came to our side and was handed to me for investigation as chairman of the customs section of the opposition, and as a result the minister was forced to act and the treasury of the country is so much better off. And yet the Minister of Customs said that he knew of no steals. It will be interesting to hear the member for New Westminster (Mr. Kennedy) who has the reputation of being a candid friend of the government tell what he knows about this transaction.

Mr. KENNEDY. Will I tell you now?

Mr. COCKSHUTT. No. You can speak when I have finished. And then the Minister of Customs came to the House and said that he would like the instructions of the House as to how these defaulters should be dealt with, and whether it was wise in the face of the tears of the wife and the children to prosecute a man who had been a defaulter to the extent of \$8,000 or \$10,000. He told us that if such a man were in his own employ he would promptly forgive him and that the man would be a faithful servant afterwards. I can conceive of nothing that should so much militate against the efficiency of our civil service than to have such a statement go broadcast throughout the country. What the minister practically says to his officials is: Put your hands in the public chest and take out \$10,000 that does not belong to you and if I discover it as Minister of Customs I will forgive you, I will allow you to keep part of the money and you can go and be a faithful servant afterwards. That is practically the statement of the Minister of Customs. It is an invitation to every man in the department to put his hand into the public chest and appropriate it to his own uses and not give it up until he is found out, and then give up only part of it, with the promise that if there is no restitution of the balance, no prosecution will follow. Could anything be more subversive of the public interest than to have it go abroad to this country that a man who does such a thing as that will be forgiven? And the minister comes down to this House two years after this defalcation has taken place and asks this House in a pitiful way how he should proceed. I know that the minister has a tender heart, and I do not want him to have anything else; but I do not see why the Customs Department should be weaker than other departments in that respect. The Minister of Inland Revenue recently gave an example which the Minister of Customs might well follow. I have here the government organ of Ottawa, the 'Free Press,' of Tuesday, June 2, containing an item which I will read for the benefit of the Minister of Customs: