

To prevent the possibility of a merchant's business being shown or exhibited to competitors, or to any one else in the same line.

Mr. BURPEE. Does this apply to the appraiser's room, as well as to the Custom House itself. Invoices lie day after day in the appraiser's office quite open and exposed, if anyone is disposed to see them.

Mr. BOWELL. The object is to prevent particularly the appraiser, under whose supervision all these invoices come, from exhibiting them or showing them to rival importers, or to any importer, or to any one outside of the Custom House. The collector, or any person assisting him, is of course entitled to examine them, as he very often does; but the only application it will have, is to prevent any Customs officer, or those in the Customs Department here, when the invoices are put on record, from showing these invoices to any person outside of the Customs Department, except on the subpoena of any court.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). The fee—50 cts.—is too large, I think; it was in the old law, and I think it might well be reduced.

Mr. BOWELL. That depends in a great measure on the length of the invoice.

On section 99,

Mr. BOWELL. This is section three of the amendment of 1881, and the only addition is, to the word "experienced," "persons" are added.

Mr. BURPEE. Instead of "merchants?"

Mr. BOWELL. Yes; very often intricate pieces of machinery have to be appraised, and merchants really are not the men best qualified to judge of their value, or of their mechanism.

On section 102,

Mr. BOWELL. The old Act read somewhat in this way:

"If in any case the true value of the goods is finally determined to exceed by 20 per cent."

To the words: "Value for duty of any goods as finally determined," we have added: "Under this Act as determined in any action or proceeding to recover unpaid duties." Making it plainer and giving it a wider scope; there is no real material change.

On section 105,

Mr. MITCHELL. It appears to me that the question as to the policy of this 105th section, is what ought to be considered by this House. I suppose it is a copy of the old Act; but yet it is a question whether the policy of giving to the officers of Customs a share in the seizures is really sound policy or not. My own mind has been very much changed on that point of late years, and I am rather inclined to think that the tendency of Customs officers, as far as my observation has gone of late years, has been rather to place difficulties in the way of commercial men with a view of getting benefit out of it for themselves. I might say that instances have come under my own notice where such a suspicion has been excited, but whether it was in reality the motive for the seizures, or whether it was simply a desire to perform their duty as public officers, I am not prepared to say. I think, however, it may well be a question for consideration whether the policy of encouraging officers to make seizures by giving them a share of the results of those seizures does not lead to greater abuses than all the losses which might occur by allowing them to do their work simply as a matter of duty.

Mr. BOWELL. The point raised by the hon. gentleman is one which is worthy of a good deal of consideration, though it does not properly come up under this clause,

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which only applies to cases where the goods have been taken by the Customs Department, on the ground of under valuation. There is a clause which enables the Government to take any goods which may be imported, and which may be considered under-valued by paying 10 per cent. in addition to the value and the costs.

Mr. MITCHELL. The principle is the same. The principle is that of allowing a public servant, who is paid a salary for the work he is required to do, to receive any portion of any fines or surpluses, whether they result from under-valuation, or attempts to defraud by a false entry.

Mr. BURPEE (St. John). I agree with the hon. gentleman for Northumberland, and although the matter is one which does not really come up in this clause, the principle is involved here. I think it would be well for the hon. Minister to consider whether it would not be well to abolish this system. There is no doubt the system was adopted for a good purpose, but at the same time, it sometimes works badly and unfairly. If any officer gets his salary, and it is sufficient to keep him, I think that is all he should have.

Mr. MITCHELL. I would suggest to the hon. Minister, that he should consider whether it would not be better to place these surplus fines into a general fund, from which such officers as show special diligence and fidelity in the performance of their duty, should receive rewards at certain periods. I think that would remove any inducement to make special seizures for the purpose of obtaining rewards, and would enable the authorities in the Customs Department to reward officers who display special vigilance.

Mr. SCRIVER. I do not agree with the hon. member for Northumberland as to the propriety of putting in the hands of the Minister of Customs any such discretionary power. I do not think it would be a prudent or proper thing to do. With regard to the principle involved in that clause, I may say that I also differ with the hon. gentleman. I believe this provision is a great incentive to energy and activity on the part of Collectors of Customs, especially in the rural districts. Unless some incentive of this kind is held out, the great majority of these officers will content themselves with attending to the duties of their offices during prescribed hours. They will not go out of their way, as it is very desirable they should do, to endeavor to try to put a stop to illegal traffic. Many instances have fallen under my own observation in which I have no doubt the belief on the part of the officer that he was to receive some reward for the extra services he performed, such as being out at night watching the roads on the opposite side of the frontier, had a great deal to do with his vigilance, and from which the best results have been attained. I think it would be a great mistake for the Department to do away with that regulation.

Mr. VALIN. I know that, in Quebec, some of these men often make these seizures as a matter of speculation, because they get their share of the profits. I know also that there are some cases in which the appraisers are to blame. There is one case in particular which I referred to the hon. Minister in which some old onion seed was bought at a price much less than new seed could be purchased for, but the appraiser did not know the difference. The question was reported to the Customs Department, and we had a great deal of trouble settling it. This shows the necessity for the appraisers being competent men. I know of cases where people go into the country and buy one-quarter of a pound of tobacco from an honest farmer, simply for the purpose of having him fined, so as to get their share.

Mr. BOWELL. My own opinion, after two or three years' experience, is exactly in accord with the sentiments which have just been uttered by the hon. member for Huntingdon (Mr. Scriver). If there be no incentive given to the officer to look sharply after improper importations which are