

is not always an easy matter, but there is no question some of these officers have been taking advantage of their knowledge and position to see that their friends, and in some cases their own relatives, get an automobile at much less than the department would desire.

Mr. MATTHEWS: Can the hon. member give me a case?

Mr. HANBURY: I have no particular case in mind but I understand this is a more or less general practice.

Mr. BOUCHARD: In support of what the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat has said, it was rumoured in my district—I have no particular case in mind; I have not had time to look into the matter and it is always difficult to get the facts of a case like that—that in one instance some people closely connected with the customs officers were given a chance to buy cars at a very low price. I do not mean there is anything irregular but there is at least a carelessness that should be remedied as soon as possible.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): As regards the advertisement of the date of sale of a car by the department, could there be a notice posted up on public buildings in Montreal so that every body might see it?

Mr. MATTHEWS: The date of sale is invariably posted and in large cities we get a valuation on the car before it is sold.

Mr. HACKETT: Just the other day I received a complaint that automobiles seized, I think it was under the Customs Act, had been destroyed because the upset price was too high. This suggestion was that the government should take a lesser price rather than destroy the automobiles and receive nothing for them. I have never heard of any complaint under the Excise Act but I have heard of complaints under the Customs Act of the kind I have just related to the committee.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): Where is the auction of such cars held in Montreal?

Mr. MATTHEWS: The cars are seized and sold in Montreal.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): What about the date of sale?

Mr. MATTHEWS: The date and place of sale are posted; they are well known.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): When did the last sale take place, and where? I am asking this just for information; I have no grievance.

Mr. MATTHEWS: I am sorry to have to say that we are selling cars every week.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): In the department in Montreal?

Mr. MATTHEWS: Yes.

Section agreed to.

Sections 71 to 118 inclusive agreed to.

On section 119—Minimum penalty.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): This section says that the courts shall have no power to suspend sentence. Is that a new provision?

Mr. MATTHEWS: No, that is not new.

Section agreed to.

Sections 120 to 123 inclusive agreed to.

On section 124—penalties belong to crown.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Would the minister explain the significance of that section?

Mr. MATTHEWS: This section, which corresponds to section 133 of the existing act, has been rewritten, to bring the Excise Act in line with the practice long ago adopted under the Customs Act of paying for information received, if such information results in conviction and the imposition of penalties; even if for various reasons the net proceeds may be a loss, that is if the fine is not paid and the convicted person prefers to serve time, or the expenses exceed the amount realized.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Is it the intention to pay an officer of your own department as well as an informant?

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hanson, York-Sunbury): It is in the discretion of the minister.

Mr. MATTHEWS: Yes, both officers and informants.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): That is, you are going to pay an official of the department who is under salary for getting information that will lead to conviction, in other words for carrying out his duty?

Mr. HACKETT: That is the rule that has obtained under the Customs Act.

Mr. HANBURY: That does not make it right.

Mr. MATTHEWS: This system has obtained under the Customs Act since confederation.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I know it has but I do not like it. I am strongly