

Hon. J. J. HUGHES: Honourable senators, the few observations that I should like to make have hardly any reference to the Speech from the Throne.

Right Hon. Mr. GRAHAM: There is precedent for that.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: As I understand it, according to our Constitution, and by parliamentary practice as well, we are permitted, and perhaps it is part of our duty, when considering the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, to bring up anything that we think would affect our country or its people for weal or for woe. During the Great War, Parliament in its wisdom imposed very high customs and excise duties, particularly on spirituous liquors; and in consequence of that legislation, which remained after the War was ended, there has grown up in Canada, I think I am justified in saying, a system of smuggling spirituous liquors which has very baneful effects. First of all, the country is deprived of revenue that it should receive; and, worse than that, I think, the people who engage in the traffic and those who sympathize with it have been practically demoralized.

This traffic is carried on in the Maritime Provinces and the lower part of Quebec—and perhaps in British Columbia; I am not familiar with conditions there—to a greater extent, I believe, than in other parts of the country. What is actually taking place in the province from which I come is this. During the season of navigation many vessels with costly equipment and crews are engaged in carrying liquors from St. Pierre-Miquelon, those islands which lie off the coast of Newfoundland, not far from the Maritime Provinces, and on which liquors can be purchased in bond, or without the payment of duty, and from the West Indies Islands, where, I am informed, they can be purchased for about fifty, sixty or seventy cents a gallon. The duty on those liquors coming into Canada is some \$10 per proof gallon. If they can be smuggled in, the profit is enormous. A rather large number of high-powered motor-boats carry the smuggled liquors from the ship to the shore, and an equally large number of high-powered automobiles carry them from the landing place on shore, where they are concealed, to the retail trade. Naturally there are no figures as to consumption, but the consumption must be very great, and many people must participate in the traffic when the profits permit of such an enormous expenditure. However, as I have already said, probably the worst feature of the situation is the fact that the character

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of the people, particularly the younger people, both men and women, is demoralized by this illegal and improper business.

The magistrates, whose duty it is to enforce the law in this respect, tell me that the cost of enforcement is enormously increased by wholesale perjury and by the fact that the traffic has the sympathy of a large number of people.

There is a small army of men, the Preventive Service, engaged in trying to stop this traffic. They are equipped with motor-boats and fast automobiles; they even have aeroplanes; but they cannot cope with it, because the facilities afforded to it by the geographical nature of our country enable the offenders to evade the officers of the law.

I have a suggestion to make to the leaders of the House—I offer it with great diffidence—namely, that a committee of this House be appointed to obtain as soon as possible all the information on this question that can be secured in a reasonable way. I bring up the matter now because we are going to adjourn to-morrow for probably ten or twelve days. If it is deemed advisable to appoint a committee, members from the Maritime Provinces, and perhaps some from the West, who have to remain here, might begin to organize, at least. I think every province should be represented on the committee. It is not my intention that much expense should be incurred. The idea in my mind is that the officers of the Preventive Service who are in or near Ottawa should be summoned to give what evidence they can, to report upon the difficulties they are encountering, to state the cost of this Preventive Service, and probably if they can do so, to give us some idea of the quantity of liquor smuggled and the effect of the smuggling on the revenue. If we were to begin now to get that information, it would be available to the Government, which, if it so chose, could take action upon it during the present session.

At one time, when prohibition prevailed in the United States, smuggling into that country from Canada was rampant, but it is my opinion that the smuggled liquor is now moving in the opposite direction. I think our duties are much higher than those of our neighbour. If a reasonable amount of information could be obtained with small expenditure, the members of this House could not be better employed than in securing it, for in so doing they would be rendering a considerable service to the Government and to the country.

I do not intend to make any motion; I desire only to make a respectful request that the leaders of the Senate will consider this