

COUNCIL CHAMBER
City Hall,
January 18th, 1918.

INVESTIGATION INTO THEFT OF LIQUOR FROM
CITY HALL

His Worship the Mayor presiding.

Edwin S. Tracey, N. S. Temperance Act Inspector, called
and sworn ..

The following report of the Inspector was read:--

Halifax, N. S., January 14, 1918.

To His Worship the Mayor
Dear Sir,

According to your request I beg to report ~~that~~
the thefts from time to time of intoxicating liquor from my
office and store room in the city.

On August 10th, 1917, I first noticed a number
of cases containing intoxicating liquor in my store room had
been opened and a quantity of liquor gone. The lock had been
unlocked by a false key, the original keys I held. I notified
the Chief of Police and had a new lock put on, but still found
that the door was being opened and liquor disappearing. I then
reported the matter to Controller Taylor several times.

On the nights of December 6, 7 and 8, and also
again on December 29th or 30th, my office was broken into and
five cases of intoxicating liquor stolen.

Edwin S. Tracey,
N. S. Temperance Act Inspector.

INSPECTOR TRACEY
to F. H. BRILL, City Solicitor --

- Q. That report is correct?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Your office is on the second floor?
- A. Yes, on the second floor.
- Q. Going back to the 10th of August, that was the first
trouble you had of losing any liquor?
- A. No. My first date goes back to July. In July the
place was broken into. I was notified of it in the
morning by the man in charge of the patrol house. I
found that two bolts had been pried off and some bottles
taken.

-2-

- Q. It is necessary for you to keep a certain amount of the liquor that you seize?
- A. Yes. It is sometimes three or four months before the question is settled.
- Q. In July when the bolt was pried off did you make a report to anybody?
- A. Yes. To the Chief.
- Q. You did not report to the Mayor?
- A. No.
- Q. What was done?
- A. It was traced to one of the police officers and the man was dismissed.

TO HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR --

- Q. Did you ever report a case to the Mayor.
- A. No.

TO THE CITY SOLICITOR --

- Q. On the 10th of August what liquor was there?
- A. I cannot say the exact quantity. The place had contained three or four if not five, large packing cases that had been seized from the International Clothing Company, and some small cases and a few barrels.
- Q. That was all liquor that was held in the way you have told, to ascertain whether it should be returned or not, pending investigation?
- A. Yes. Some of it should have been destroyed, but it was not. One lot of that should have been destroyed but not in the large cases.
- Q. The most of it was there pending investigation?
- A. Yes.
- Q. On the 10th of August you noticed it opened? In the morning?
- A. I cannot tell the time of day. I noticed some of the large cases open. The cases had been opened and the empty straws left.
- Q. You are sure the stuff was in the case the day before?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You reported that to the Chief of Police?
- A. Yes, the same day.

-3-

- Q. You did not report that to anybody else than the Chief?
- A. I reported it to Controller Taylor, either that day or the next.
- Q. Between Controller Taylor and the Chief, what did they do?
- A. I do not know of anything being done. I put on a new lock.
- Q. Did you tell the Chief of Police that you had put on a new lock?
- A. Yes, he knew that.
- Q. Did Controller Taylor know that a new lock had been put on?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. A new lock was put on?
- A. Yes, a new lock by myself.
- Q. What happened then?
- A. I found when I made that first report that no further question was asked about it. Then I noticed about a week hence that some stuff was missing.
- Q. You put a Yale lock on in the meantime?
- A. Yes. Previous to this, on August 16th, going into the patrol house I found my door open.
- Q. Was the Yale lock on then?
- A. Yes. That was the second lock I had put on. I found the door open.
- Q. Can you get duplicate keys for Yale locks?
- A. I held both keys.
- Q. Did you make any report of this?
- A. Controller Taylor was present in the patrol house at the time. This was in the patrol house. This all happened in the patrol house. Down stairs in the store room.
- Q. This was not taken out of your office up stairs?
- A. No. The office does not start until the time of the catastrophe.
- Q. Were you the only person who had the keys for this?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did the Chief of Police or Mr. Taylor or anybody else have a key for that lock?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you ask how the door came to be open?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What did you find out?
- A. The man I questioned said they wanted to see how much store room was there.
- 5

- Q Was there any liquor there?
- A. Yes, a bale full of ale outside my door. I put it back. There were six or eight bottles of whisky in a basket by the door that had been withdrawn from the case. I put that back.
- Q. Did you complain to anybody about this? Did you go to the Mayor to to the Board of Control about it?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you bring the matter up before the Board of Control or the Mayor?
- A. No.
- Q. Have you told us all about the liquor that was taken from the patrol housedown stairs?
- A. Yes. I spoke to Controller Taylor about it and said it was only a matter of time when there would have to be a public investigation; that the liquor was there and I was responsible for it; that it was disappearing and it was a question of time when I would be called upon to have it made good.
- Q. Did you take any steps to have an investigation?
- A. No. There was nothing touched for a month or more. In the meantime I had destroyed the liquor that was ordered to be destroyed, and there was nothing left only some very cheap stuff. What disappeared after that was mostly beer.
- Q. Have you anything else to tell about the place down stairs?
- A. No.
- Q. At the time of the explosion had you any liquor stored in your office on this floor?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What was there?
- A. Nine or ten cases.
- Q. That was cases of what?
- A. Mostly whisky.
- Q. Do you know anything about the quality or brands or marks?
- A. Some of it was Macmurdo.
- Q. Do you know whether it was good or bad whisky?
- A. I amnot qualified to passan opinion.
- Q. It was held pending investigation?
- A. Yes. There have been applications made for three cases of it since.

- Q. You are being sued in the Supreme Court, are you not?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Is that any of the liquor that you are being sued for?
- A. No.
- Q. How many applications have you in respect to that liquor?
- A. One. Two cases.
- Q. Where were you when the explosion occurred?
- A. I was at the Market Building.
- Q. Did you come right down here?
- A. No.
- Q. When did you come to your own office?
- A. The next day.
- Q. Then all the day of the 6th you were not in the building?
- A. I was not in the building.
- Q. On Friday, the morning of the 7th, you came here?
- A. Yes.
- Q. In what condition did you find your office?
- A. The glass was partly broken in the door and the lock had been turned. It could be opened through the broken glass.
- Q. Was the lock damaged?
- A. No. Not the first time.
- Q. The glass was broken in?
- A. The glass was broken in.
- Q. I suppose you noticed the other doors in the Hall?
- A. Yes, the glass was broken.
- Q. Did you notice that the glass was broken in the Solicitor's office?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you notice that the locks and keepers of the door were broken off?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you notice the condition of the door of the Assessor's office?
- A. No.

- Q. The library doors were broken, were they not?
- A. Yes.
- Q. The building at the time was practically a distributing centre for the city when you came down Friday morning? It was crowded with people?
- A. Yes, quite a number of people.
- Q. I suppose you know that the offices were nearly all taken over by one or other of the various committees?
- A. Mine was not at the time.
- Q. Were the others at that time?
- A. I noticed that the Board of Health and the Assessor's were.
- Q. Did you notice that the Library was taken over?
- A. I was not in there.
- Q. You did not know that the Library was taken over as a food distribution?
- A. I did not.
- Q. What about the Aldermen's Room?
- A. I did not notice that. I was in charge of the poultry and had to try to save them.
- Q. Did you notice the door next to your office?
- A. The door was broken.
- Q. You came down in the forenoon?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You say the lock was turned. What do you mean by that?
- A. When you go inside you do not have to have a key to open the door. You turn the knob back and the door opens.
- Q. All you can say is that the lock was not destroyed?
- A. No.
- Q. If I can put my hand through the open glass and turn the knob and get in and then pull the door to again nothing has happened to the lock?
- A. No.
- Q. Then what makes you say that the lock was turned?
- A. Because I got a report in the morning that the door was open. I got a telephone message to come down.

- Q. When you came down in the morning somebody told you that the door had been opened?
- A. Yes.
- Q. When you got to the office the glass was broken and the lock was alright?
- A. The glass was broken and the lock was alright.
- Q. What did you find missing?
- A. I found a case with three flasks left in. The rest had been taken and another case was gone.
- Q. To whom did you report this?
- A. I did not report it to anyone.
- Q. You did not report it to the Mayor or to the Chief of Police or to the Board of Control?
- A. No. I made some enquiries and was told that perhaps it had been used for relief and I let it go at that.
- Q. Who told you that?
- A. I dont know.
- Q. The Hall was crowded, was it not?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Your office is a pretty well known place?
- A. Yes.
- Q. From the enquiries you made you were told that it had been taken for relief?
- A. That is what I heard.
- Q. Some time or other the doctors were in your office?
- A. Not at that time.
- Q. How long was it before the doctors came in?
- A. The doctors came in I think Sunday or Monday.
- Q. How you were told by somebody that what had been taken was taken for relief, and you made no report to anybody. Just tell us what you did?
- A. Then I had the door boarded up by men who were working there. That was in the forenoon. Then I went away and left it. I was not here the rest of the day and I am not positive that I was here again before Sunday. Then I got another report that the door was broken open again.

- Q. Who gave you this report?
- A. I dont know. I got a telephone message to come down, that my door was open. I went down and found the lock smashed this time.
- Q. Were the doctors in by this time?
- A. No.
- Q. You found the lock smashed?
- A. Yes, and a couple more cases of liquor gone.
- Q. Did you make any investigation?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you enquire as to whether it was taken for relief?
- A. No. I heard no remarks at all.
- Q. Did you report this to the Chief of Police or the Mayor or the Board of Control?
- A. No. I mentioned it to someone in the Hall, but I cant say who.
- Q. Do you mean someone just out in the Hall?
- A. It was someone I metn but I would not be positive.
- Q. Did you mention it to the Deputy-Mayor, Mr. Colwell?
- A. I spoke to him afterwards about it.
- Q. On Sunday when you came down Mr. Colwell was in the building, was he not?
- A. I would not be positive about that. I know I mentioned it afterwards.
- Q. You say that you found the lock had been broken?
- A. Yes, That is the catch where the lock goes into had been smashed. The keeper. It showed that it had been pried open by pressure. The door had been pried open.
- Q. Then tell us just what you did?
- A. Everyone around the Hall knew more about it than I did.
- Q. ~~p/d~~ Do you mean that there were all sorts of rumors?
- A. They said "Who took your liquor?" and like that. I did not report to anyone, and I left it stay at that. I removed the liquor and took it upstairs to the janitor's apartments.
- Q. How long after that wasit before the doctors moved in there?
- A. I think they came in the first of the week. They were clearing up the room then.

-9-

- Q. And the liquor stayed in the janitor's quarters after that?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Has it remained there ever since?
- A. No. I took it away.
- Q. Did you have any stolen after that?
- A. On the night of December 29th it was broken into again.
- Q. How long previous to this had you brought it back from the janitor's quarters?
- A. I had not brought it back then. This was a new supply.
- A. Did you make any report about that?
- A. No. I endeavored to catch the person myself and laid there a couple of nights until two or three o'clock, but they did not return.
- Q. And you made no report to the Chief of Police?
- A. No. I kept it quiet. That night before I left, about six o'clock that night, Controller Taylor came into my office and he enquired if I had anything open and I informed him I had not and he came behind the counter and looked around at the cases and went out, and when I came back Monday morning the cases were open.
- Q. I think you told us that the only information you got as to where it was gone was the relief?
- A. That was just a joking remark.
- Q. Do you know of your own knowledge that any of this liquor was used for relief purposes?
- A. No. I would not consider it fit to be used for relief purposes.
- Q. Did any of the relief people ask you for liquor?
- A. No.
- Q. Did any person who claimed to be suffering get any liquor from you?
- A. Yes, a couple of bottles were given for the relief men who were recovering bodies.
- Q. You know that there was a great dearth of liquor for genuine relief purposes in the city?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Some men got a few bottles from you for the Morgue?
- A. Yes.

-10-

- Q. You did not make any further enquiries yourself outside of what you have told us?
- A. No. I never mentioned it to the Mayor then or at any time.
- Q. Can you throw any light on the subject as to how this report appeared in the papers?
- A. No. I cannot. I kept it from the press because at the time there was a report I heard and I refused to tell them. It was a month before it got into the papers. It was current talk all over the building and outside.
- Q. That is, what you want us to understand is that when you came down you found the door broken and a whole crowd of people and you think the report got into the papers through current talk?
- A. Yes. I was interviewed by the Mail as to the correctness of it.
- Q. You have told us all you know about it?
- A. Yes. I have told the facts as they exist. I cannot charge anyone directly.

The Chief of Police was asked if he could give any information on the subject and said that all he knew about it was what he had seen in the papers. He did not have the key of the patrol house from which the liquor was taken. If the liquor had been left in his charge he would have had the key and would have looked after it. Other liquor had been left in his charge and it is there yet.

ALDERMAN H. S. COLWELL, Deputy-Mayor, called --

To the City Solicitor --

- Q. You are Deputy-Mayor, and in Mayor Martin's absence from the City you immediately took charge of the relief work so far as the City was concerned?
- A. Yes.
- Q. That continued Friday and Saturday and two or three days afterwards, for when the Mayor returned he was suffering from an attack of Bronchitis?
- A. More or less for a week.
- Q. You might tell us the condition that the building was in after the disaster?
- A. As far as I can remember, most of the doors on the ground floor and this floor were demolished, or more or less damaged. They were very insecure, so far as I could see.

-11-

- Q. What about the crowd and the condition of the building?
- A. The place was filled with all kinds of people.
- Q. What about the offices? Where they kept under the control of the civic authorities or under different committees?
- A. Different committess later in the day of the 6th established themselves wherever they could. Wherever it was sufficiently sheltered. They went into all the offices. Any place where they could get shelter.
- Q. The building itself was very badly demolished?
- A. It was wide open.
- Q. The Board of Control was sitting pretty steadily down stairs, was it not?
- A. Yes. The controllers were mostly all in the building all day. They were there at the call of the Chairman for an emergency meeting at any hour. I was here day and night like most of the others.
- Q. Did you have any complaint from Mr. Tracey about anything that was lost?
- A. No.
- Q. You know that there was a medical relief board in the building?
- A. Yes.
- Q. I think they had the Exhibition office for a while?
- A. They had the Treasurer's office for a while too.
- Q. They had the Inspector's office for a while. Is that correct?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Perhaps you can tell us whether or not the doctors were asking for liquor for relief puposes?
- A. Yes. They were asking for it. They asked me and I did not pay very much attention to it at first, but Colonel Weatherbe came to me and said it is absolutely necessary to have some kind of stimulant, whisky preferred. I said alright. I will get some for you. I sent an order to Sullivan the Vendor and got a small quantity and passed it over.
- Q. Did you find out afterwards whether or not Sullivan was able to supply the demands?
- A. Yes, he was very shortly sold out and had nothing to sell.
- Q. Did you find out if he got it through the express offices?
- A. He told me he could not.
- Q. Do you know anything about the theft of liquor?
- A. I know nothing about the theft of liquor from Tracey's office except that I heard people saying Tracey's stock is gone; and it did not surprise me to know that it was gone because all sorts of people were coming in.

The members of Council present were asked to give any information they had in the matter, and replied as follows:--

ALDERMAN H. E. MACNAB -- I have no information. I know nothing about it except what I saw in the newspapers. I saw the charges made in the HERALD and MAIL and I thought it was hardly fair to the aldermen and officials to allow the charges to go unchallenged. Of-course my motion was not so much with regard to the stealing of booze as with regard to who were drunk around the building at that time. That is one of the most serious charges. The city officials and elected representatives they claim were drunk in the building at the time when they should have been sober and attending to the public. The people came here suffering from all sorts of calamities looking for help and they went to the officials and the officials were drunk and could not give them help. The story goes that some of the officials of the committees came over here to confer with them and found that they were not in a fit state to confer with anybody. That is one of the charges that was asked to be investigated. As to the stealing of the liquor from Mr. Tracey's office, we can all see that that is going to be a hard thing to get at. We will never get at who took it. It was taken when all thieves take things, in the dead of night when there was no one around to see them take it. To-day somebody handed me something here addressed to Alderman MacNab and signed by nobody. It is suggesting a few things that we might ask Inspector Tracey after he is put on his oath. Some of these things here I would hardly like to ask the Inspector. I do not think it would be quite fair. The Inspector is here on his oath and I am not the examining attorney.

Alderman MacNab passed the letter to the City Solicitor, who stated that the questions contained therein had already been put to Mr. Tracey.

ALDERMAN R. B. COLWELL -- I know nothing about it, except what I saw in the paper.

ALDERMAN F. A. GILLIS -- I knew nothing about it until it came out in the paper.

ALDERMAN E. J. KELLY -- I want the charges investigated and proven, and if not proven retracted. The charges against the aldermen and officials of the City of Halifax. All I know about it is what I saw in the paper.

ALDERMAN W. G. FOLEY -- I know nothing about it. I was not in the Hall the 6th, 7th, 8th or 9th except for a little while, and saw nobody drunk while I was here. I know nothing about the liquor.

-13-

ALDERMAN H. L. HART -- I know nothing about it except what I saw in the paper. I think that the aldermen and officials have been charged unjustly. I saw nobody drunk and they were attending to their duties.

ALDERMAN M. DAY -- I know nothing about it.

ALDERMAN R. D. GUILDFORD --I know nothing about it, but would like to see them exonerated.

ALDERMAN J. E. GODWIN -- I know nothing about it. I did not see it in the papers.

ALDERMAN J. S. PARKER -- I know nothing about it. I am a busy man outside of the City Hall and knew nothing about it.

His Worship the Mayor requested that anyone present who could throw any light on the subject would do so.

Mr. R. H. MURRAY asked to be allowed to put some questions to Inspector Tracey.

INSPECTOR TRACEY
To Mr. R. H. MURRAY --

Q. Was the store room ever broken into before the explosion?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you find anyone in your store room at the time?

A. There were two persons present. I have said one. The Deputy-Chief of Police was also in the building. The door was open.

Q. Did you have any explanation or conversation?

A. Yes. I said the explanation was that they were looking to see how much room there was.

Q. Did they have any right there?

A. No. I had the keys.

Q. Did you have any interview with the Deputy about that afterwards?

A. I did some time after. It might have been a month.

His Worship the Mayor informed Mr. Murray that the questions must be discontinued until the Deputy-Chief would be present at a future meeting.

-14-

THE REVEREND HAROLD T. ROE -- I came here in common with other citizens this afternoon, and while we listened to the questions with regard to the store room being broken into, I do not know that anything has been brought to light about the conduct of the city officials. I would ask if there is any truth in the report that the City Clerk was suspended for a day or two days on account of being under the influence of liquor?

His Worship the Mayor called on Deputy-Mayor Colwell to reply.

DEPUTY-MAYOR COLWELL -- The City Clerk was here practically day and night and was a very busy man. At the first meeting of the Board of Control he asked to be excused, as he had other duties to take up, and the Assistant City Clerk was appointed Secretary of the Board of Control until further orders.

Hearing adjourned -- to be resumed at the call of His Worship the Mayor.