

DISPOSAL OF VESSELS OR VEHICLES FORFEITED TO THE UNITED STATES FOR VIOLATION OF THE CUSTOMS LAWS OR THE NATIONAL PROHIBITION ACT

FEBRUARY 16, 1925.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. SMOOT, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 3406]

The Finance Committee, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3406) relating to the use or disposal of vessels or vehicles forfeited to the United States for violation of the customs laws or the national prohibition act, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The favorable recommendations of the Treasury Department are indicated in the following letter:

JANUARY 17, 1925.

Hon. REED SMOOT,
*Chairman Committee on Finance,
United States Senate.*

DEAR SENATOR SMOOT: Reference is made to the request of your committee, dated June 2, 1924, for suggestions touching on the merits of S. 3406, a bill relating to the use or disposal of vessels or vehicles forfeited to the United States for violation of the customs laws or the national prohibition act, and for other purposes, and the propriety of its passage. The first session of the Sixty-eighth Congress having adjourned on June 7, last, the department did not have time to give the proposed measure due consideration and make a report to your committee before adjournment.

It is the belief of administrative officers of the department concerned in the enforcement of the national prohibition act and the customs laws that the bill in question should be enacted into law.

Merchandise seized for violation of the customs laws and the national prohibition act and forfeited is now required to be sold at public auction. Occasionally boats and vehicles engaged in the illegal importation or transportation of intoxicating liquor are, when offered for sale at auction, bought on the account of those from whom they were seized and are again placed in illicit traffic in liquor, and at prices much lower than similar boats or vehicles could be purchased for in the open market.

The appropriation for enforcing the customs laws will not permit of the purchase of a sufficient number of boats and vehicles for the use of the Customs Service in combating the illegal liquor traffic; and the Prohibition Unit is without authority of law to purchase passenger-carrying motor-propelled vehicles

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and is under the necessity of hiring automobiles for use of its enforcement agents in traveling and for patrol duty. To hire one automobile for 24-hour patrol duty costs at least \$20 per day, and in many instances \$25. The monthly expense accounts of prohibition enforcement agents assigned to patrol duty in sections where smuggling and illegal transportation of liquor are going on extensively show expenditures of around \$200 per month for automobile hire.

The department is of the opinion that if S. 3406 is enacted into law it will serve a two-fold purpose: First, it will withdraw from the illegal traffic in liquor boats and automobiles which are now being used to violate the law; and second, it will provide the Government means of transportation in conducting enforcement work without cost except for running expenses and upkeep, which would be a great deal cheaper than hiring vehicles by the day or mile.

The passage of S. 3406 would not necessitate a supplemental estimate of expense.

Very truly yours,

A. W. MELLON,
Secretary of the Treasury.

