

Booze Ring All-Powerful in Great Britain Yet Nation Faces Rum-Running Problem



which the tax is paid for this reason: brandy that goes through the government hands is watered down to a certain proof. Brandy that comes by way of the smuggler is not watered down. It is full strength and therefore worth far more to the drinker.

The business of booze smuggling in England is almost entirely in the hands of the fishermen of the southern and southwestern English coasts.

Every morning these men put forth in their stream trawlers or gasoline motor boats and head across the English channel to the fishing sections near the French coast. Here they also find French and Belgian fishermen, who sell brandy, rum, wine and liquors by case loads.

In the evening the British return with two loads, one for night trafficking and one for daylight. They have their pals along the coast who guide them to secluded coves by means of signal lamps. Here the booze is quietly landed. The fishing boats then innocently make for the nearest harbor which has a fish market, anchor for the night, and dispose of their fish in the morning.

The owner of a fishing boat can make more out of his catch than booze than out of his fish.

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BY MILTON BRONNER
NEA Service Staff Correspondent.
LONDON, Feb. 8.—A dark night. Fog along the coast. A trawler comes to a deserted cove with its load of innocent fish—and not so innocent booze.

No, this is not about the United States Rum Row where ships are smuggling British booze to American bootleggers. This particular story deals with British boats which smuggled French booze into merry England.

For just as anti-booze rules the west in the United States, so booze is all powerful in Great Britain.

It is powerful in parliament, powerful in the party machines, powerful in society and powerful in the press. It even has its friends in the churches. It has no strenuous opposition in the colleges and universities. It permeates all branches of British life. That is why the makers of beer, whisky and gin in Great Britain don't worry much.

Peering Now the "Berrage"
The last parliament had in the House of Lords 12 members who were directors in ten big whisky or brewery concerns. A number of these had made their entire fortune out of booze. In the House of Commons there were 16 brewers and distillers interested in 27 companies whose \$250,000,000.

None of the big newspapers of Great Britain is owned by the beer and whisky lords, but the press, as a whole, is favorable to their business for two reasons: the owners think the public sentiment favors the wets and the owners make huge sums of booze advertisements. Makers of well-known brands of whisky, beer and gin take columns of space in British newspapers to boost their wares.

Not only that, but the big department stores of Great Britain have liquor departments on a scale of lavishness never known even in New York and Chicago. It is no unusual thing to see these department stores taking a quarter of a page at a huge price to advertise their bargains in liquor. It is no unusual thing to see some ad waxing lyrical in its phrase of "100-year-old brandy—the very soul of the grape"—and only \$50 a bottle.

With Great Britain the most highly taxed country in the world, the booze interests have another potential argument. They point out that owing to high taxes on their business, alcohol has yielded an increased revenue of about \$150,000,000 per annum which could not be raised so easily and so expeditiously any place else.

And so just as bootlegging is a recognized "business" along our coast, so smuggling is a recognized "business" along the English channel. So much so that parliament may be asked to provide money for a coast guard.

In the United States prohibition is the cause of bootlegging. In England the main cause of smuggling is taxes.

Before the war the British revenue tax on French brandy and on European wines was merely nominal. It didn't pay to smuggle.

After-war conditions changed this. In the endeavor to make its budget balance, the government has soaked all liquor with a very heavy duty.

A bottle of whisky which sells retail at 12 shillings and 6 pence has already been taxed 8 shillings and 5 pence half penny. In other words, two-thirds of what the consumer pays for the booze is government tax. Half of what the consumer pays for French brandy is accounted for by government tax. Wines are taxed anywhere from two shillings up to 6 and 8 shillings per gallon.

Fishermen Get Rich Running Rum.
With a government tax of over \$2 per bottle, the smuggler can easily

afford to take the risk and split what is saved on the tax. In other words, he can sell his booze to the dealer for \$1 less than it would cost him to buy from regular wholesalers. Often the smuggler can get the full price that is paid for booze on

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