



Companies Act 1948

1948 CHAPTER 38 11 and 12 Geo 6

PART V

WINDING UP.

(v) PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO EVERY MODE OF WINDING UP

Offences antecedent to or in course of Winding Up.

328 Offences by officers of companies in liquidation.

- (1) If any person, being a past or present officer of a company which at the time of the commission of the alleged offence is being wound up, whether by or under the supervision of the court or voluntarily, or is subsequently ordered to be wound up by the court or subsequently passes a resolution for voluntary winding up—
- (a) does not to the best of his knowledge and belief fully and truly discover to the liquidator all the property, real and personal, of the company, and how and to whom and for what consideration and when the company disposed of any part thereof, except such part as has been disposed of in the ordinary way of the business of the company; or
 - (b) does not deliver up to the liquidator, or as he directs, all such part of the real and personal property of the company as is in his custody or under his control, and which he is required by law to deliver up; or
 - (c) does not deliver up to the liquidator, or as he directs, all books and papers in his custody or under his control belonging to the company and which he is required by law to deliver up; or
 - (d) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter conceals any part of the property of the company to the value of ten pounds or upwards, or conceals any debt due to or from the company; or

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- (e) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter fraudulently removes any part of the property of the company to the value of ten pounds or upwards; or
- (f) makes any material omission in any statement relating to the affairs of the company; or
- (g) knowing or believing that a false debt has been proved by any person under the winding up, fails for the period of a month to inform the liquidator thereof; or
- (h) after the commencement of the winding up prevents the production of any book or paper affecting or relating to the property or affairs of the company; or
- (i) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter, conceals, destroys, mutilates or falsifies, or is privy to the concealment, destruction, mutilation or falsification of, any book or paper affecting or relating to the property or affairs of the company; or
- (j) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter makes or is privy to the making of any false entry in any book or paper affecting or relating to the property or affairs of the company; or
- (k) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter fraudulently parts with, alters or makes any omission in, or is privy to the fraudulent parting with, altering or making any omission in, any document affecting or relating to the property or affairs of the company; or
- (l) after the commencement of the winding up or at any meeting of the creditors of the company within twelve months next before, the commencement of the winding up attempts to account for any part of the property of the company by fictitious losses or expenses; or
- (m) has within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter, by any false representation or other fraud, obtained any property for or on behalf of the company on credit which the company does not subsequently pay for; or
- (n) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter, under the false pretence that the company is carrying on its business, obtains on credit, for or on behalf of the company, any property which the company does not subsequently pay for; or
- (o) within twelve months next before the commencement of the winding up or at any time thereafter pawns, pledges or disposes of any property of the company which has been obtained on credit and has not been paid for, unless such pawning, pledging, or disposing is in the ordinary way of the business of the company; or
- (p) is guilty of any false representation or other fraud for the purpose of obtaining the consent of the creditors of the company or any of them to an agreement with reference to the affairs of the company or to the winding up;

he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall, in the case of the offences mentioned respectively in paragraphs (m), (n) and (o) of this subsection, be liable on conviction on indictment to penal servitude for a term not exceeding five years, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, and in the case of any other offence shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months:

Provided that it shall be a good defence to a charge under any of paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (f), (a) and (o), if the accused proves that he had no intent to defraud, and to

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a charge under any of paragraphs (h), (i) and (j), if he proves that he had no intent to conceal the state of affairs of the company or to defeat the law.

- (2) Where any person pawns, pledges or disposes of any property in circumstances which amount to a misdemeanour under paragraph (f) of subsection (1) of this section, every person who takes in pawn or pledge or otherwise receives the property knowing it to be pawned, pledged or disposed of in such circumstances as aforesaid shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and on conviction thereof liable—
- (a) in England to be punished in the same way as if he had received the property knowing it to have been obtained in circumstances amounting to a misdemeanour;
 - (b) in Scotland on conviction on indictment to penal servitude for a period not exceeding seven years, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds, or to both such imprisonment and fine.
- (3) For the purposes of this section, the expression “officer ” shall include any person in accordance with whose directions or instructions the directors of a company have been accustomed to act.

329 Penalty for falsification of books.

If any officer or contributory of any company being wound up destroys, mutilates, alters or falsifies any books, papers or securities, or makes or is privy to the making of any false or fraudulent entry in any register, book of account or document belonging to the company with intent to defraud or deceive any person, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and be liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

330 Frauds by officers of companies which have gone into liquidation.

If any person, being at the time of the commission of the alleged offence an officer of a company which is subsequently ordered to be wound up by the court or subsequently passes a resolution for voluntary winding up,—

- (a) has by false pretences or by means of any other fraud induced any person to give credit to the company;
- (b) with intent to defraud creditors of the company, has made or caused to be made any "tiff" or transfer of or charge on, or has caused or connived at the levying of any execution against, the property of the company ;
- (c) with intent to defraud creditors of the company, has concealed or removed any part of the property of the company since, or within two months before, the date of any unsatisfied judgment or order for payment of money obtained against the company ;

he shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months.

331 Liability where proper accounts not kept.

- (1) If where a company is wound up it is shown that proper books of account were not kept by the company throughout the period of two years immediately preceding the commencement of the winding up, or the period between the incorporation of the

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company and the commencement of the winding up, whichever is the shorter, every officer of the company who is in default shall, unless he shows that he acted honestly and that in the circumstances in which the business of the company was carried on the default was excusable, be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.

- (2) For the purposes of this section, proper books of account shall be deemed not to have been kept in the case of any company if there have not been kept such books or accounts as are necessary to exhibit and explain the transactions and financial position of the trade or business of the company, including books containing entries from day to day in sufficient detail of all cash received and cash paid, and, where the trade or business has involved dealings in goods, statements of the annual stocktakings and (except in the case of goods sold by way of ordinary retail trade) of all goods sold and purchased, showing the goods and the buyers and sellers thereof in sufficient detail to enable those goods and those buyers and sellers to be identified.

332 Responsibility for fraudulent trading of persons concerned.

- (1) If in the course of the winding up of a company it appears that any business of the company has been carried on with intent to defraud creditors of the company or creditors of any other person or for any fraudulent purpose, the court, on the application of the official receiver, or the liquidator or any creditor or contributory of the company, may, if it thinks proper so to do, declare that any persons who were knowingly parties to the carrying on of the business in manner aforesaid shall be personally responsible, without any limitation of liability, for all or any of the debts or other liabilities of the company as the court may direct.

On the hearing of an application under this subsection the official receiver or the liquidator, as the case may be, may himself give evidence or call witnesses.

- (2) Where the court makes any such declaration, it may give such further directions as it thinks proper for the purpose of giving effect to that declaration, and in particular may make provision for making the liability of any such person under the declaration a charge on any debt or obligation due from the company to him, or on any mortgage or charge or any interest in any mortgage or charge on any assets of the company held by or vested in him, or any company or person on his behalf, or any person claiming as assignee from or through the person liable or any company or person acting on his behalf, and may from time to time make such further order as may be necessary for the purpose of enforcing any charge imposed under this subsection.

For the purpose of this subsection, the expression “assignee ” includes any person to whom or in whose favour, by the directions of the person liable, the debt, obligation, mortgage or charge was created, issued or transferred or the interest created, but does not include an assignee for valuable consideration (not including consideration by way of marriage) given in good faith and without notice of any of the matters on the ground of which the declaration is made.

- (3) Where any business of a company is carried on with such intent or for such purpose as is mentioned in subsection (1) of this section, every person who was knowingly a party to the carrying on of the business in manner aforesaid, shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or to both.

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- (4) The provisions of this section shall have effect notwithstanding that the person concerned may be criminally liable in respect of the matters on the ground of which the declaration is to be made, and where the declaration under subsection (1) of this section is made in the case of a winding up in England, the declaration shall be deemed to be a final judgment within the meaning of paragraph (g) of subsection (1) of section one of the Bankruptcy Act, 1914.

333 Power of court to assess damages against delinquent directors, &c.

- (1) If in the course of winding up a company it appears that any person who has taken part in the formation or promotion of the company, or any past or present director, manager or liquidator, or any officer of the company, has misapplied or retained or become liable or accountable for any money or property of the company, or been guilty of any misfeasance or breach of trust in relation to the company, the court may, on the application of the official receiver, or of the liquidator, or of any creditor or contributory, examine into the conduct of the promoter, director, manager, liquidator or officer, and compel him to repay or restore the money or property or any part thereof respectively with interest at such rate as the court thinks just, or to contribute such sum to the assets of the company by way of compensation in respect of the misapplication, retainer, misfeasance or breach of trust as the court thinks just.
- (2) The provisions of this section shall have effect notwithstanding that the offence is one for which the offender may be criminally liable.
- (3) Where in the case of a winding up in England an order for payment of money is made under this section, the order shall be deemed to be a final judgment within the meaning of paragraph (g) of subsection (1) of section one of the Bankruptcy Act, 1914.

334 Prosecution of delinquent officers and members of company.

- (1) If it appears to the court in the course of a winding up by, or subject to the supervision of, the court that any past or present officer, or any member, of the company has been guilty of any offence in relation to the company for which he is criminally liable, the court may, either on the application of any person interested in the winding up or of its own motion, direct the liquidator to refer the matter, in the case of a winding up in England, to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and, in the case of a winding up in Scotland, to the Lord Advocate.
- (2) If it appears to the liquidator in the course of a voluntary winding up that any past or present officer, or any member, of the company has been guilty of "any offence in relation to the company for which he is criminally liable, he shall forthwith report the matter, in the case of a winding up in England, to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and, in the case of a winding up in Scotland, to the Lord Advocate and shall furnish to the Director or Lord Advocate, as the case may be, such information and give to him such access to and facilities for inspecting and taking copies of any documents, being information or documents in the possession or under the control of the liquidator and relating to the matter in question, as they respectively may require.
- (3) Where any report is made under the last foregoing subsection to the Director of Public Prosecutions or Lord Advocate, he may, if he thinks fit, refer the matter to the Board of Trade for further enquiry, and the Board shall thereupon investigate the matter and may if they think it expedient, apply to the court for an order conferring on the Board or any person designated by the Board for the purpose with respect to the company

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concerned all such powers of investigating the affairs of the company as are provided by this Act in the case of a winding up by the court.

- (4) If it appears to the court in the course of a voluntary winding up that any past or present officer, or any member, of the company has been guilty as aforesaid, and that no report with respect to the matter has been made by the liquidator to the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Lord Advocate under subsection (2) of this section, the court may, on the application of any person interested in the winding up or of its own motion, direct the liquidator to make such a report, and on a report being made accordingly the provisions of this section shall have effect as though the report had been made in pursuance of the provisions of subsection (2) of this section.
- (5) If, where any matter is reported or referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions or Lord Advocate under this section, he considers that the case is one in which a prosecution ought to be instituted, he shall institute proceedings accordingly, and it shall be the duty of the liquidator and of every officer and agent of the company past and present (other than the defendant in the proceedings) to give him all assistance in connection with the prosecution which he is reasonably able to give.

For the purposes of this subsection, the expression “agent ” in relation to a company shall be deemed to include any banker or solicitor of the company and any person employed by the company as auditor, whether that person is or is not an officer of the company.

- (6) If any person fails or neglects to give assistance in manner required by the last foregoing subsection, the court may, on the application of the Director of Public Prosecutions or Lord Advocate, as the case may be, direct that person to comply with the requirements of the said subsection, and where any such application is made with respect to a liquidator the court may, unless it appears that the failure or neglect to comply was due to the liquidator not having in his hands sufficient assets of the company to enable him so to do, direct that the costs of the application shall be borne by the liquidator personally.