

REPORT

OF

THE SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

WORKING OF THE DISTILLATION ACT,

WITH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

REPORT BROUGHT UP 30TH OCTOBER, 1871, AND ORDERED TO BE PRINTED.

WELLINGTON.

—
1871.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 18TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1871.

Ordered, That a Select Committee be appointed to take into consideration the working of "The Distillation Act, 1868." Such Committee to consist of Mr. Macandrew, the Hon. Mr. Gisborne, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Calder, Mr. T. L. Shepherd, Mr. Shephard, and the Mover. Three to be a quorum.

A true extract.

F. E. CAMPBELL,

Clerk to the House of Representatives.

(On motion of Mr. Collins.)

REPORT OF THE DISTILLATION COMMITTEE.

YOUR Committee have the honor to report that they have carefully considered "The Distillation Act, 1868," and have taken the evidence of Mr. Seed, Inspector of Distilleries, thereon, and do recommend that the Act be amended so as to enable publicans to brew beer for sale on any part of their premises.

30th October, 1871.

A. S. COLLINS,
Chairman.

FRIDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 1871.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

PRESENT :

Mr. Calder,
Mr. Collins,

Mr. Henderson,
Mr. Macandrew.

On motion of Mr. Henderson, *Resolved*, That Mr. Collins be appointed permanent Chairman.

The Committee proceeded to consider the general principles of "The Distillation Act, 1868."

On motion of Mr. Macandrew, *Resolved*, That Mr. Seed, Inspector of Distilleries, be summoned to attend the Committee on Wednesday next, at 11 o'clock.

The Committee then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 25TH OCTOBER, 1871.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

PRESENT :

Mr. Calder,
Mr. Henderson,

Mr. Macandrew.

Mr. Collins in the Chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Seed, Secretary and Inspector of Customs, and Inspector of Distilleries, was in attendance and examined.

In answer to the Chairman, Mr. Seed stated that the only case in which his Department had been referred to as to the distillation of drugs, was that of Mr. Tatton of Nelson.

During the examination of Mr. Seed, the Chairman read some extracts from a letter he had received from Dr. Irvine, of Nelson, with reference to Mr. Tatton's case.

Mr. Seed was requested to produce any correspondence that had passed between himself and Mr. Popham, of Dunedin, as to the manufacture of fruit wines, and was then thanked, and withdrew.

The Committee was adjourned until Friday next, at 11 o'clock.

FRIDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 1871.

The Committee met pursuant to adjournment.

PRESENT :

Mr. Macandrew,

Mr. Shephard.

Mr. Collins in the Chair.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman produced the correspondence forwarded by Mr. Seed in accordance with the request of the Committee at its last meeting, relative to the case of Mr. Popham, of Dunedin.

On motion of Mr. Macandrew, *Resolved*, That it is expedient to amend "The Distillation Act, 1868," so as to enable publicans to brew beer on their own premises for sale.

The Chairman was requested to draw up a Report in accordance with the decision arrived at by the Committee, and to present the same to the House.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Mr. Seed was in attendance and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it would be desirable to alter the Act so as to remove the restrictions in the case of stills, and for distilling chemical compounds and extracts from herbs?—I think it would not be desirable to remove these restrictions, as it is impossible to know what purposes a still may be used for. For instance, a still, although nominally intended for chemical purposes, may be used for the production of spirits of wine, for the manufacture of eau-de-Cologne, and other scents.

2. Would a small still of 8 gallons capacity enable its owner to distil spirits to the detriment of the revenue?—Yes.

3. What ought Mr. Tatton to have done to prevent his still from being taken away?—It was not taken away.

4. What steps should he have taken to obtain a new license?—Mr. Tatton did take the necessary steps. After “The Distillation Act, 1868,” came into operation, he applied to have his old license renewed. I informed him, through the Collector of Customs at Nelson, of the conditions under which he could have a license. He expressed himself willing to comply with these conditions, but said, as he was about leaving Nelson for a time, he would be unable to enter into the requisite bond at once, and requested that his still might be placed under the Customs seal on his own premises. Since that time I have had no communication from him on the subject.

5. Do you think the twenty-four hours’ notice required by the regulations before any distillation of herbs can take place might be lessened?—I think it would be advisable to retain this restriction in the regulations, in order to give the Department control over chemical stills, in case it should be found that they were being used to the detriment of the revenue. Practically, very little inconvenience would arise from this restriction; for as soon as the Revenue officers found that a still was being used exclusively and *bond fide* for the preparation of chemical compounds, and not in the production of spirits, these restrictions would be relaxed. I should be prepared to instruct the Collectors of Customs, at ports where such distillation takes place, to interfere as little as possible, so as to afford every facility for carrying on the industry in question, consistently with a due regard to the protection of the revenue.

6. Have you had any complaint from parties engaged in making fruit wines?—Yes; one, I think, from Otago. By a provision in the Distillation Act makers of wine are classed as “brewers.” This necessitates their registering their premises and procuring a brewer’s license, the annual fee for which is £1. They are placed under the same conditions as brewers,—that is to say, their premises are subject to inspection, so that it may be seen that the revenue is not being defrauded, and that no deleterious substances are being used for adulteration.

7. Do you take any steps to prevent adulteration?—Yes; we send round occasionally for samples of beer, and have them tested.

8. Do you think publicans in country districts should be allowed to brew on their own premises?—I see no objection to this being allowed at places where there is a resident officer of Customs, who could occasionally inspect the premises and plant to see that they were only used for the brewing of beer. In places where there are no Customs officers, no doubt arrangements could be made with the Provincial authorities to allow officers of the police to inspect such breweries.
