

No. 12.

The CHIEF INSPECTOR OF DISTILLERIES to Mr. CAWKWELL.

Customs Department (Distilleries Branch),

SIR,—

Wellington, 22nd August, 1873.

I have received, and laid before the Hon. the Commissioner of Customs, your letter of the 8th inst., and have been directed by him to state that what was intended to be conveyed in my letter of the 30th ult. was, that if Parliament, with the information that it now possesses, finds that it made a mistake in fixing the excise duty on spirits at too low a rate, there is nothing to prevent it from remedying that mistake whenever it considers that course to be necessary in the interests of the country; and that whenever the duty is raised, no claim from the distillers for compensation could be recognized.

I am to take this opportunity to point out to you that when the Government, in the Session of 1868, submitted the Distilleries Bill to the Legislature, the duty on New Zealand distilled spirits was proposed to be 8s. per gallon; that in the course of the discussion on the Bill an amendment was proposed, and hastily carried against the Government, that the duty should be at the rate of half the import duty for the time being. The Government felt at the time that if distilleries were established with the duty at this rate, there would soon be a serious falling off in the revenue, and it accordingly took the earliest opportunity of intimating to you, when you applied for a distiller's license, that the present rate of duty could not be looked upon as likely to be maintained. I am to add that somewhat similar representations to those you have made have been received from the Dunedin Distillery Company, in reply to which they have been informed that the Government may find it necessary at an early date to propose to Parliament an increase of the duty on New Zealand distilled spirits, but that it had been decided not to propose any increase this Session.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEED,

W. J. Cawkwell, Esq., Auckland.

Chief Inspector of Distilleries.

No. 13.

Mr. CAWKWELL to the CHIEF INSPECTOR OF DISTILLERIES.

SIR,—

Auckland, 2nd September, 1873.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd of August, explaining what did not appear to me to be quite intelligible in your letter of the 31st of July.

The Commissioner of Customs, you also inform me, holds the opinion that if Parliament makes a mistake by which a loss of revenue is incurred, there is nothing to prevent that mistake from being remedied whenever that course is considered necessary in the interests of the country. That Parliament has the power it would be absurd for me to attempt to deny, but I cannot admit that it is either reasonable or just that Parliament should remedy its own mistakes in a manner to cause serious loss to individuals, or, possibly, even effect their ruin. I respectfully submit that mistakes should be remedied at the expense of those who make them.

I am much obliged for the information you give (which is quite new to me) of what passed in Parliament when the Distillation Act was under consideration. I cannot, however, see how this can affect the matter in question, for it can hardly be contended that the proposals made by the Government, but rejected by the Legislature, can be treated as modifying the provisions of an Act of Parliament; or that the interests of those to whom the Act applies can be prejudicially affected by the fact that the members of the Government and the Legislature differed in their views as to what some of the provisions of the Act should be.

I beg to thank you for the information that it has been decided not to propose this Session any increase of the duty on New Zealand distilled spirits.

I have, &c.,

Wm. Seed, Esq., Chief Inspector of Distilleries, Wellington.

W. J. CAWKWELL.

No. 14.

The CHIEF INSPECTOR OF DISTILLERIES to Mr. CAWKWELL.

Customs Department (Distilleries Branch),

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th March, 1874.

Adverting to the subject of your letter of the 18th April last, and the subsequent correspondence thereon, I have now the honor, by the direction of the Hon. the Commissioner of Customs, to inform you that the Government have again had the matter of settling the duty hereafter to be charged on New Zealand spirit under their consideration, and propose to bring in a Bill to raise the duty:—

1s. per gallon on the 1st July, 1875.

1s. " " 1877.

1s. " " 1879.

I have, &c.,

W. J. Cawkwell, Esq.,

H. S. McKELLAR,

Crown Distillery, Auckland.

(for the Chief Inspector of Distilleries).

No. 15.

Mr. CAWKWELL to the CHIEF INSPECTOR OF DISTILLERIES.

SIR,—

Vulcan Lane, Auckland, 16th April, 1874.

We have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th of March, in which you inform us that the Government have again had the matter of settling the duty hereafter to be