

the duty upon wax were the same in New Zealand as in Victoria the manufacture of candles would flourish without increasing the tax one cent.

117. *Mr. Laurenson.*] How do you feel with regard to the proposed tariff as a whole?—I do not agree with it all.

118. But as a whole?—No. If I took candles as an item I should say I approved of that line, because it has a margin in the duty upon wax.

WEDNESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1906.

FRANK SISSON examined. (No. 7.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a fruit-grower, I understand, residing at Papanui, Christchurch?—Yes.

2. We shall be glad to hear any evidence you may have to offer?—I understand that this reciprocity treaty, if passed, will hold good for three years, and if that is so, all the associations connected with fruit-growing are considering the feasibility of getting an extension of two months of the duty in the year on apples and pears. The present duty extends to the 14th July at 1d. per pound, and if this proposal were carried it would affect our interests very much.

3. *Mr. Hogg.*] What fruit is the duty on?—Apples and pears. If this proposal were carried in the House it would stop us from bringing this matter forward. Then, again, the 1d. duty is from the 1st January to the 14th July, and now it starts on the 1st March and continues until the 14th July, and this comes very hard on all the earlier or summer fruits. If Tasmania can "chip in" with the halfpenny duty it will come very hard on the New Zealand fruit-growers. We consider that the reason why we should be protected is that the wages we pay in this colony are considerably higher than are paid in Australia. Recently the unions were advocating before the Arbitration Court 1s. a day additional wages, which will make it still harder for the fruit-growers. If the duty is taken off these fruits it will make it still more difficult for us to compete. Land is dearer here, as well as wages, compared with Tasmania. I have only 45 acres laid down in fruit, and spend about £800 in wages every year, so you will see that the proposal is one of considerable importance to me. The Government have been trying to foster this industry all they know how in the past. I am planting a thousand fruit-trees this year, and propose to plant another thousand next year, and if, after we have spent our capital, we have to compete unfairly against Australian fruits, we shall be put in a hole. That is about all the evidence I have to give.

4. *The Chairman.*] Those are the main points?—Yes.

5. *Mr. Laurenson.*] What is your idea about letting grapes in at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound—are you in favour of it?—No, we are not. We think it will crush all the vineries and grape-houses throughout New Zealand.

6. Are there many?—Yes; and you cannot put up a decent grape-house for less than £300 or £400.

7. What do grapes bring retail at Christchurch on an average?—A shilling a pound when they are plentiful.

8. When are they sold at a shilling a pound?—I have seen them marked up at that price, but I am not growing grapes.

9. Are they not more likely to be marked at 1s. 6d. than 1s. a pound?—I believe they are.

10. Do you know the retail price of grapes in Australia?—I believe they are from 2d. to 4d.

11. Do you know that they can be bought at 1d. per pound retail?—Yes, I believe they can. I know a person who grew grapes in Adelaide, and had to give them to the pigs because it would not pay him to take them to market. I understand that if they were imported here the packing and charges in freight and auctioneer's expenses would bring up the cost to such an amount that the public would not be able to get them much cheaper than 9d. per pound. By the time the fruiterers had picked out the rotten ones and made the remainder fit for consumption, the price to the consumer could not be less than 6d. to 9d.

12. Is it not a fact that the price quoted from the Australian growers when the season is in is on an average £1 10s. a ton?—I dare say it is.

13. That is 1s. 6d. a hundredweight. Do you not think, therefore, that we ought to get them at 6d. a pound?—Yes.

14. Is it possible for New Zealand, except one small district in Otago, and one or two places in the north, to grow grapes?—No.

15. Do you think it reasonable, from the fruit-consumer's point of view, that we should be debarred from getting fruit from Tasmania to-day because a few people want to grow grapes under glass?—Well, the towns live on the country, and I know if I go into town to buy a pair of boots I have to pay 75 per cent. duty on them. I consider that in a country like this we should be protected in every way until our chief industries are able to support themselves.

16. With regard to apples and pears, on an average what do they sell at during the plentiful season—during the two months we are extending the duty over? What is the wholesale price for apples and pears?—2d. to 2½d. a pound—that is, for a fair season.

17. The freight and charges from Australia amount to about  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound?—I think they amount to 1s. 9d. a case.

18. That is a fraction over. With a duty of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. that would make a difference of 1d. per pound, and we propose to make the duty last two months longer in the year. Would not that protection of 1d. be enough when apples and pears were pretty plentiful in this colony during the months we propose to include?—I do not know about that. The  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. duty would not stop the Tasmanian people a bit. They hold the Melbourne and Sydney markets for their good fruit, and after supplying them, they dump their rubbish into New Zealand.