

18. *Mr. Duncan.*] So as to be able to produce any required goods?—Of some improved looms we have now sent an order for we shall practically lose one in five.

19. *Hon. Sir. J. Hall.*] What average dividends have been paid by the company since it has been started?—7 per cent. is the average. For several years we paid 10 per cent. One year we paid nothing. We had labour troubles to contend with at that time.

20. You suggest that the income-tax should be reduced one-half to industrial companies?—Yes.

21. Why should not that apply to industrial individuals?—We have no objection to that at all. I am simply here in the interest of the company.

22. I do not know why you should draw any distinction?—No: I simply represent the company.

23. I understand you do not make any claim for a further duty on woollen goods?—No, we think the present tariff quite sufficient.

24. It is 25 per cent.?—Yes.

CORK CULTURE AND MANUFACTURES.

WEDNESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 1892.

HON. MR. REYNOLDS EXAMINED.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee are desirous of hearing anything you have to say with regard to the cork industry, of which we understand you possess information; the growing of the timber, and the manufacture of the cork?—I may say that I was brought up, in a great measure, to the cork business in Spain and Portugal. I acquired a thorough knowledge both of the growing and stripping, and also a slight knowledge of the manufacturing. There is now in Auckland, I am given to understand, some person who has started the industry of cork-cutting. There is also a proposal to start a manufactory in Dunedin. The great difficulty, however, is that there is so much waste in the manufacture—in fact, equal to nearly 60 per cent.—upon which freight has to be paid, and the refuse is no good except for burning—for fire purposes. The duty at the present time upon manufactured corks is 15 per cent., and it is considered that if the industry is to be encouraged at all the duty ought to be somewhere about 40 per cent. Of course such an industry would be but a small affair in the meantime, possibly employing about from a dozen to twenty men, but it is sure to be a large industry ere long, and a growing industry. The only question is whether or not it should be encouraged by sufficient protection.

2. Do you mean by “a growing industry,” an industry that would lead to the growing of trees?—No; the manufacture of cork.

3. You mean that the manufacture would increase?—Yes, the manufacture would increase. Now, with regard to the growing of corkwood, I may say that the trees are of very slow growth. It would take forty or fifty years before a tree would reach perfection, but it would be a very profitable undertaking at the end of that time to any one who entered upon the planting of forests. I may state that at one time I thought of planting somewhere about one hundred acres of cork-forest; but at that time there was some talk in Parliament here of preventing any one tying land up beyond a certain number of years. I gave up the idea because it would have been of no use until the expiration of forty or fifty years. I thought of leaving it to my descendants. I may just add that I have known one cork-tree yield nearly one hundred and twenty pounds' worth of cork at one stripping. A tree will only yield a crop of cork in from seven to ten years. I do not think I have anything further to say unless to reply to questions.

4. Is the timber an ordinary oak-timber?—Yes.

5. Do you think the encouragement of cork-cutting, the manufacture of corks, would be effected by a protective duty—that it would call attention to the industry generally, and lead to the plantation of cork-trees?—I think it would, provided security were given that the planter would not be interfered with. It is no use planting a cork-forest without security of tenure.

6. What are the difficulties in the way of planting?—You get the seed from South Australia.

7. Is it there in abundance?—Yes, I am told so. They are growing it there, and doing exceedingly well.

8. The acorn could be obtained from South Australia?—Yes, and planted here.

9. There could be no difficulty in getting an abundance of acorn?—I do not think so. I have two trees that in time will bear; they are about twenty years old.

10. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] What size are they?—About the height of this room.

11. *The Chairman.*] What size is the timber?—Not quite so large as my waist.

12. About a foot in diameter?—I should say somewhere thereabout.

13. *Mr. Duncan.*] Did you state that you could only get a crop off them once in seven years? You get more than one bark off these trees?—Yes, you get a crop every seven years or so. The older the tree the better the quality of the bark or cork.

14. You can strip them once in seven or ten years?—Yes; it varies according to the soil.

15. Without any injury to the tree?—Without any injury to the tree.

16. *The Chairman.*] You do not take it all off?—Yes, you take it all off; but there is an inner bark.

17. *Mr. Duncan.*] Have you any knowledge of what dimensions the industry would be at the present time, if there was such a duty imposed as would stop the importation of made corks?—Well, it is impossible to say. I should say if all the corks were manufactured here that are used there would be from twenty to twenty-five men wanted in the industry. The industry is small in the meantime, but it is a business that would grow greatly in this country. The moment we commenced exporting bottled beer it would become a very large industry. I may say that the cork grown and manufactured in Spain, Portugal, and the south of France is considered of the greatest importance to those parts of the world. It is a very large industry in those countries, and receives every consideration at the hands of the respective Governments.