

455. No complaint has been made on this head as to the labelling of beer. The evidence shows, however, that some manufacturers of hop beer have for some time past been inclined to give their product fancy names, though these have caused very little deception. But with the development of the night-club trade in the Auckland district two licensed manufacturers of hop beer commenced to bottle an imitation beer exclusively for the night-club trade. This hop beer was bottled in reputed quart bottles and labelled as "XXXX Draught Ale" or "Gold Band Lager," in close resemblance to standard liquors and sold for slightly more than similar liquors. In addition to any saving in cost of manufacture over beer, the manufacturer of this hop beer saved the duty of 6d. per bottle.

456. Evidence was given that Ballins Breweries described the contents of a liquid they sold as "Rhum Punch." According to the label, it "gave you that glowing feeling." The contents contained only 23·7 per cent. proof spirit, and the Analyst informed us that the glowing feeling was due to a peppery extract.

457. A recommendation was made by the Dominion Analyst, with the support of all his colleagues other than the Government Analyst at Auckland, that the labelling of alcoholic liquor sold to the public should be placed on a uniform and readily understandable basis (R. 511). He submitted that this result might be secured if the alcoholic content of liquors were stated on labels in parts per cent. by volume instead of by proof spirit. He submitted that the public at large had no appreciation of what "percentage by proof spirit" really meant.

458. Proof spirit is a mixture of alcohol and water. The standard mixture is termed "spirit at proof" or "100 per cent. proof spirit." It contains 49·28 per cent. by weight or 57·1 per cent. by volume of alcohol. Although this volume is not strictly correct at all temperatures of the standard mixture, the difference is ignored for Customs and excise purposes. The system of grading spirits by reference to the standard of 100 per cent. proof spirit, and so of determining the amount of Customs or excise duties payable, is well established. The measurement is made by a well-known instrument—Sykes' hydrometer. Spirits may be "overproof" or "underproof" according to their strength.

While the proof spirit standard is retained for Customs and excise purposes in Great Britain, the method of stating alcoholic content by volume is now adopted in the British Pharmacopœia and in the Canadian Food and Drugs Regulations (R. 299).

459. The Customs Department considered that every label for fermented and spirituous liquors should show the alcoholic content (R. 628). The Department had no objection to the use of percentage by volume in respect of beer, wine, medicinal preparations, hop beer, and the like, but it objected to the use of any measure of alcoholic content other than proof spirit in connection with strong spirits such as brandy, whisky, rum, and gin (R. 666). The Department considered that the long-established practice of using proof spirit to indicate the strength of spirits, for which the Department had suitable testing hydrometers, should be retained.

460. The Government Analyst at Auckland was opposed to any change from proof spirit in connection with any liquors. He considered that measurement of alcoholic content by volume was no better than measurement by proof spirit. He thought the significant strengths of proof spirit were well understood by the public.

461. We conclude that, as the percentage by volume is now used in the British Pharmacopœia, the percentage by volume should be shown on the labels of all beer bottled in New Zealand, and by proof spirit and by volume on the labels of all wines and spirits bottled in New Zealand.

We think inquiry should be made to ascertain whether it is practicable to require exporters overseas to specify on their labels the volume and the proof spirit of the contents of the bottles they export. After importation, the strength could scarcely be ascertained without opening the bottle. Even if that were authorized, the manufacturer or exporter might be unwilling to entrust the statement of the strength by volume or proof spirit