

APPENDIX TO REPORT OF FLAX COMMISSIONERS, 1870-71.

[EXTRACTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.]

I.—APPOINTMENT OF AGENTS IN ENGLAND.

(No. 2.)—CHAIRMAN of Flax Commission to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.—21st November, 1870.

I have the honor to request that you will be so good as to inform the Flax Commissioners whether they can avail themselves of the services of Mr. John Knowles as their agent in England, to carry out their instructions, and to collect information with reference to the supply and manufacture of New Zealand flax.

(No. 9.)—The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY to DR. HECTOR.—28th November, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 2, of the 21st inst., and to inform you that while Mr. Knowles is in England in the service of the General Government, his services are at the disposal of the Flax Commissioners.

(No. 54.)—CHAIRMAN to Messrs. ROBERT CHRISTIE and Co.—29th December, 1870.

The attention of many of the settlers of New Zealand has for several years past been directed to the preparation of the fibre of the *Phormium tenax* for the English market, but they have not succeeded hitherto in inventing machinery which will do full justice to the plant, or produce an article equal to that which the Natives obtain by the simple but tedious process of hand-dressing.

The question is one of great importance to the Colony, as the raw material exists in vast quantities in many of the districts, and large sums of money have been expended in experiments and machinery; and with a view of more fully developing the industry, a Commission has been appointed by the Governor, at the instance of the Legislature, to make inquiries, and to take steps for improving the manufacture and for bringing it more generally to the notice of the English trade; and it is a part of the duty of the Commissioners to appoint agents in England to assist them in carrying out these objects. Being aware that you have already taken an active interest in this question, and that from your connection with the trade you will be able to bring the fibre under the notice of manufacturers, they request your aid in the following matters, in which they have been instructed to take action:—

1. To place in the hands of manufacturers supplies of the various kinds of flax fibre, with the view of ascertaining by practical tests to what purposes it can be profitably applied.

2. To submit samples to makers of flax machines, and invite suggestions as to the improvement of machines usually employed in the Colony.

3. To ascertain the market value of the fibre, and the reason for the different prices obtained; and, generally, what can be done to extend its use and increase its market value.

One of the Colonial-made machines and some seven or eight tons of flax from different manufacturers will shortly be sent to England for the purposes above mentioned; and should you consent to assist in these investigations, a portion of these latter will be handed over to you, and further instructions will be transmitted when they are shipped.

I now beg to enclose a variety of documents that have published by authority of the New Zealand Government in connection with this subject.

Mr. John Morrison, the Colonial Agent, Adelaide Place, London, will be requested to communicate with you, and to assist you in procuring fresh leaves of the *Phormium tenax* for any machine-maker who may wish to make experiments.

(No. 64.)—CHAIRMAN to the Hon. DR. FEATHERSTON, Agent-General.—23rd March, 1871.

The Flax Commissioners are required by the terms of His Excellency's Commission, in accordance with a Resolution of the House of Representatives, to appoint one or two agents in England, as they may think fit, to be in correspondence with them, and generally to carry out their instructions.

Unless they can obtain the services of a gentleman who has local knowledge and experience, a general acquaintance with the industry, and also that individual interest in the subject without which usefulness is hardly to be expected, they feel that they are working at a great disadvantage, and will not be able to fulfil one of the chief objects for which they were appointed.

Some time ago they were offered by the Government the services of Mr. John Knowles as long as he remained in England, but he has returned to the Colony, and the Commissioners have not up to the present time succeeded in meeting with another qualified person willing to undertake the Agency, as they cannot offer sufficient inducement to any one to go home specially for this purpose.

They now learn that there is a prospect of Mr. Buller shortly proceeding to England on other duties, and are anxious to secure his services, feeling sure that no more competent agent could be employed; but they find a difficulty in making any proposal to that gentleman, as the tenure of their Commission is only temporary, and may cease shortly after the meeting of the next Session of Assembly.