

1890.

NEW ZEALAND.

FLAX AND OTHER INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE) ON THE FLAX INDUSTRY, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.

Brought up 26th August, 1890, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 23RD DAY OF JULY, 1890.

Ordered, "That a Select Committee be appointed, to consist of ten members, to consider all matters pertaining to the development of the flax and dairy produce and wine-producing industries; with power to call for persons and papers. The Committee to consist of Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. Valentine, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Marchant, Hon. Captain Russell, Mr. Walker, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Hamlin, Major Steward, and the mover; three to be a quorum."—(MR. BEETHAM.)

THURSDAY, THE 31ST DAY OF JULY, 1890.

Ordered, "That it be an instruction to the Select Committee, appointed on the 23rd instant, to inquire into all matters pertaining to the development of flax and dairy produce and wine-producing industries, to add the fruit industry."—(MR. HOBBS.)

REPORT ON THE FLAX INDUSTRY.

YOUR Committee have the honour to report that they have taken evidence bearing on the New Zealand flax industry from manufacturers, experts, and others interested in the trade, and have carefully considered correspondence and other documentary evidence laid before them.

2. Your Committee have been much indebted to the able correspondence of the Agent-General, whose evidence, assisted by that of his correspondents, with respect to the present uses of the fibre, points to the conclusion that it is, as at present exported, chiefly used, either alone or in conjunction with manilla, for rope- or twine-making.

3. Your Committee have been much impressed with the rapid increase of the export of the New Zealand flax fibre, and are gratified to observe from the evidence before them that, notwithstanding the serious decline in prices lately experienced—a decline which was equally shared by kindred fibres—manufacturers are apparently not discouraged, but, on the contrary, are still producing largely. It must be remembered, however, that the fibre as now exported is fit only for the manufacture of rope and twine and for such purposes for which manilla and sisal are used.

4. Your Committee, being strongly of opinion that the New Zealand fibre is capable of greater possibilities, think that some steps should now be taken to further the industry; they, therefore, beg to make the following recommendations, viz.:—

5. That the Government should offer a bonus of £10,000 for the encouragement of the flax industry, to be devoted to the following purposes, viz.:—

(a.) For a process of flax-dressing which will reduce the cost of production:

(b.) For a process which will improve the quality of dressed fibre, making it suitable for textile purposes:

(c.) For a mode of utilising the waste products of the industry.

6. Appended will be found regulations, which the Committee recommend for adoption by the Government, under which the bonus can be earned.

7. That steps be taken to establish classification at the port of export, to be undertaken by Inspectors appointed by Government, and that the Government should confer with hemp-millers for the purpose of framing regulations.

8. That, as your Committee regret to find that there has virtually been no inquiry into, or report on, the production of New Zealand flax fibre since 1873, they recommend that the evidence now before them be printed in pamphlet form, and that Sir James Hector's pamphlet ("Phormium as a Fibrous Plant") be reprinted, together with carefully-revised information obtained during the present inquiry, and any additional information that may be procurable with respect to experiments conducted during the progress of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, or at any other time, in connection with New Zealand flax fibre.