

23. In the market now they are making jute into binding-twines?—Jute is better than bad flax. That same firm said my fibre was very suitable, and they sent me back an order for 500 tons. I have 1,000 tons on order now.

24. *Major Steward.*] You have been experimenting with machinery with a view to getting rid of those difficulties you point out, and to produce flax in a better form?—I have been experimenting to bring the fibre into use for textile purposes. If my machine comes out it will make it 200 per cent. better than the sample now before you.

25. If any bonus were offered by the Government for the production of flax of a certain standard, or the invention of machinery to do this, it would have the effect of stimulating invention, and possibly result in successful processes being developed?—My opinion about it is this: If the Government would offer a substantial bonus for a machine to turn out flax for textile purposes it would be a grand thing for the country.

26. If such a bonus were offered, should it not be for the production of a given quantity of a given standard?—Of course it should. If it were made suitable for textile purposes it would be a very good thing. Fibre would be worth £80 a ton here.

27. *The Chairman.*] Have any number of your machines been in use in the colony?—Yes, my machines are what are called Anderson's machines. I have had my own patterns made, and I have given Anderson liberty to make from my patterns. My machines are equal to turning the fibre out for any purpose except for textile purposes.

28. Are any used in the North Island do you know?—I believe so.

29. Have you seen any of the North Island fibre?—I have seen some this morning on the wharf.

30. Do you consider it is the defect of the machinery here, or what?—It is not the fault of the machinery, but want of knowledge in working.

31. Have you tried dressing flax by the chemical process?—No, I have not. I do not think a chemical process would be any good.

32. Have you any reason to urge why you think that?—I have heard that chemicals always destroy it. A number of people have tried it. It was tried twenty-five years ago in Christchurch with chemicals of different sorts.

33. What was the effect of the trial?—None of the trials came to any good.

34. Does it not tend to make the vegetable matter come away more readily and leave the fibre cleaner?—Yes; but I can take all the vegetable matter off without chemicals.

35. Have they not a process of steeping the green leaf in a chemical solution for the purpose of removing the vegetable matter?—I could not say. I do not think that would pay; it would take such a large quantity of chemicals.

36. You have made no practical test of it yourself?—No; not with chemicals.

37. *Mr. Wilson.*] Have you had any experience as to the condition in which flax is shipped generally, as to its wetness, dryness, or otherwise—its fitness to be put on shipboard?—No, only my own.

38. Are you of opinion, if flax were shipped in a damp condition, that there is any danger of heating or firing?—No, none whatever. It has been tried in different places to my knowledge—damped flax being dumped as hard as it could be and stowed away as a test. I do not care how you put the flax together in a damp or bad condition it will not fire; it is not like wool.

39. You do not think it is even like hay?—No.

40. If hay is put together not sufficiently dry it will fire?—Hay will, but flax will become rotten if put together in a damp or unfit condition.

41. The danger of shipping flax in an unfit condition would not be, as regards its sufficient dryness, that it might take fire, but that the flax itself would be deteriorated?—Yes; rendered useless.

42. Is it not a fact that a great deal of flax was shipped from New Zealand during the recent boom in an improper condition?—There is no doubt about that.

43. You know that of your own knowledge?—I went to one place—it was at a mill—I saw them pressing the flax, and I took a hank, and could wring the wet out of it. I told the person at the time that the fibre would be rotten at the journey's end. He said, "It does not matter; they will give me a good advance on it."

44. *Major Steward.*] That being so, is it or is it not a fact that the arrival in London of considerable proportions of shipments in such a condition as this would tend to keep down the market-price of flax generally?—It would.

45. Would it be desirable, do you think, that some arrangement should be made whereby flax could be inspected by some Government Inspector before shipment, to grade it as it were?—I have heard different arguments about inspection. Some people think it ought to be inspected at the shipping ports, but I disapprove of that altogether. If the Government want to inspect the flax at all it ought to be done at the mills before being pressed up. I do not see how you are going to inspect the flax when it is packed up and sent to the shipping port.

46. If any system of inspection could be devised, would it be an advantage to the honest manufacturer?—It would to a great extent, because the people who did not dress it properly would not be allowed to send it away.

47. Flax certified by the Government Inspector and bearing the Government brand would command a better price in the London market than the flax which is now sent at a risk?—The buyers would have to get confidence in the Government brand before they would be satisfied with it. My flax would sell anywhere. I have worked it up for twenty years. My brand is known wherever the fibre is sent, and my trade has increased now to nearly three times what it was twelve months ago.

48. On the whole, it would not be desirable, in your opinion, to have a Government inspection?—No; but if there was an inspection it should be done at the mills.