

as cheap with engines as with the water, because one saves cartage with an engine; but with water you have to put them in where you have the water-power, which often involves extra cartage.

125. It depends on the situation of the water?—Yes.

126. You think £14 a ton is fair?—Yes.

127. Have you visited any of the mills in this district?—No.

128. You say you have only seen one sample of the flax produced in the North Island?—I saw a few samples on the wharf this morning.

129. And you thought they were inferior?—Very inferior; neither washed, bleached, nor anything else.

130. If you had visited some of the mills you would be able to form a better idea?—Yes.

131. It is not fair to say all the flax is bad if you have only seen a few samples, as you say?—I have always understood the North Island flax-leaf to be better than that of the South Island. It is not the fault of the flax nor the machinery, but the fault of the people who dress it.

132. As far as the present demand is concerned, the machines are good enough as they are at present?—Yes, they are quite up to the occasion. We do not want better machinery for the purposes for which the fibre is at present used.

133. Do you mean to say you could not, by a certain process, turn out the flax cheaper; £14 seems an enormous price to pay for turning out flax. In the Foxton district you can get it done much cheaper?—Perhaps it is not in a bad place for carting?

134. The mills are very close?—I have lately given 5s. a ton for flax, paid 6s. for cutting, and 7s. for the carting, and it costs me another 5s. for railway carriage, and then I have to make a living out of it.

135. Is that hill- or swamp-flax?—Principally hill-flax. I do not care which it is so long as it has a good green leaf. But I like a good swamp-flax very well: it is soft and works nicely.

136. Would not the hill-flax be the stronger fibre?—There is a lot of difference in the flax and the ground it grows upon. I have seen both hill- and swamp-flax brittle. Much depends upon the nature of the soil.

137. What do you think the best soil to grow flax?—You want nice gullies and hollows with deep loamy soil. In our district there is a good deep soil, the flax grows well, and has strong fibre.

138. You think your proposed new machine will turn out flax not only for the purposes it is used for at present, but for the finer purposes also?—Yes, it will do for anything.

139. What will be the cost of it?—I could not tell you the cost of the machine at the present time.

140. What will be the cost of turning out flax by such a machine as you hope to make?—It will cheapen the cost a good deal.

141. Even of the ordinary flax turned out now?—Yes; it will not cost any more per ton than it does now, only, of course, it will take another ton or so of green leaf to make a ton of the fibre, which, however, would be worth three times the money.

142. It is quite obvious to get a trade for fabric purposes would be a new trade?—Yes.

143. Would the process you hope to bring out make the ordinary flax cheaper, supposing you found that for fabric purposes we could not get a good market?—Yes; for we could alter the setting of the machine so as to dress a quality equal to that by present machines, or to any required grade up to a fineness fit for fabric purposes.

144. Do not the present beaters in the existing machines bruise the flax?—No; that is the fault of the man who is looking after it.

145. Have you seen the new machine of Bull's?—No; I wish to see it.

146. Supposing you brought out a new process for turning out a large quantity of flax for fabric purposes, and the highest price you could get was £50, would it not pay better to turn out a large quantity of the present flax?—We could not say that until we have tried it.

147. As to the inspection, you say the proper place for an inspection would be at the mills?—I should think decidedly that would be the proper place.

148. That would mean a Government Inspector for every mill in the colony?—Yes; if you wanted to inspect them all. I should not want an Inspector to inspect my mills.

149. Would it not be better to open the bales at the port?—I should be very sorry to have my bales opened up. I do not think that would be the right way at all. It would destroy the bales to pull them about. If there were to be any inspection it should be in the manufacture of the fibre. I do not see how it could be properly done without the Inspectors visiting the mills where it was manufactured.

150. *Mr. Valentine.*] Would it not be sufficient if the Government Inspector at the port inspected so many bales out of each shipment? It seems to me this would be sufficient, because, if the senders knew the Inspector could inspect any bale he chose, they would be careful?—People will stop doing this when they find it does not pay.

151. The very fact that the Government had appointed an Inspector at the port of shipment would have a deterrent effect on those who have not been carrying on their business properly?—No doubt it would have that effect.

152. It would have that moral effect on the people?—Yes.

153. *Mr. Wilson.*] Do you find that the longer the hemp is the more sale there is for it?—Most of my customers like it fairly long. Flax from 5ft. to 7ft. or 8ft. long is as good a length as is required.

154. If you could get cultivated flax, would it be of any better quality?—I do not think it would.

155. *Major Steward.*] There are a great many varieties of flax?—Yes.

156. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Five?—I know of seven myself, and it is said there are twenty-seven or twenty-eight.