

very great area, and, so far, they have never been able to get a machine to dress the fibre. All that is done by the Natives; that accounts for the cost.

293. Has it not been understood that it can be produced at something like £6 a ton?—I do not know. We have to bear in mind that we could produce New Zealand fibre at £8 a ton by the proposed improved process. Dr. Hector has gone into the cost of producing sisal.

294. Do you think it possible to make our flax available for such articles as can be manufactured from manila—our fibre is not so strong for rope as manila?—I attribute that to this: that every time the beater beats the bar it bruises the fibre. If you scrape instead of bruise you increase its tensility.

295. You think the fibre is as strong as manila?—I cannot positively say, not having made practical tests.

296. Your third point is the possibility of converting flax for other purposes: have you any information of any attention having been drawn to that recently?—No; the interest in that seems to have died out. Finer articles have been produced from it of a beautiful silky appearance.

297. You have, I suppose, seen flax that has been prepared by the Maoris?—Yes.

298. How does that appear with the flax turned out with the machinery we have?—It is altogether different in appearance. It is much softer and silkier and generally superior.

299. Then, we should rather apply our attention to scraping than bruising?—Yes.

300. *Mr. Wilson.*] Last night there was some talk of not having a bonus, but allowing the machine to take its chance with the royalty?—That is doing nothing in fact, because at the present time the maker of a machine could claim a royalty. It has been stated that by advertising a machine can be got, but I think there is nothing in that. I think no good machine would come into direct use unless something substantial was offered by the Government, to draw the attention of inventive genius, otherwise you will not get anything. The machine will come, I feel confident.

301. The only thing to do is for the Government to give a substantial bonus?—Yes, I think so. To produce flax of equal quality to manila is the second point; and the third point is to produce flax for purposes other than manila and sisal can be used for, and I think that can be done, according to Dr. Hector's opinion.

302. You are certain that you are representing the millers?—I certainly should have appeared here for them had they known. I appear here also as a practical miller and merchant.

303. Have you seen Mr. Bull's machine? What is your opinion of it?—I can hardly express an opinion; I have not seen sufficient of it.

304. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] You are of opinion that flax can be produced as cheaply as sisal?—Yes.

305. And I gather that the fibre unbruised is equal in strength to manila?—That I cannot be certain about. I have not tried the tensility, but I think it is equal if not superior.

306. *Mr. Wilson.*] You speak of a revolving beater going against a bar (that bar in your machine is stationary). Mr. Chinnery said in his case it struck against a revolving roller?—We abandoned the revolving roller, for the flax was bruised in the same way.

307. If you used scratcher-teeth, would not that be an advantage?—No; it will produce the fibre cleaner, but the cost would be quite 20 per cent. more—that is, from the hackler.

308. *The Chairman.*] What is your opinion as to the best form of bonus, assuming that the Government should decide on offering one? Do you think it would be necessary that the machine should produce a given number of tons of flax at a given price?—Yes; under the superintendence of a committee of men appointed by the Government to see that it is genuinely done and that the proper quality is turned out.

309. Also that, as there are so many varieties of flax, that so many tons should be produced from each district?—Yes; you mean different machines? I do not think any difference would be required in the machine for different varieties of flax.

310. Is there any suggestion as to the form the bonus should take providing the Government agreed to vote the money necessary?—No; but I would be prepared to give liberal conditions. I think they are very easily given.

311. Would you draft out what you consider to be fair conditions as representing your association. The Government would be very glad to have any suggestions of the kind?—Yes, certainly.

312. As far as the amount to be proposed as a bonus, have you any suggestions to make?—I think that should be left. As I said before, we should require £10,000. When we consider that flax as it is now represents half a million of money a year it should be a substantial bonus, as it is to increase the output of flax and to improve the quality.

313. *Major Steward.*] Would not £5,000 be an inducement to any inventive engineer, coupled with the fact that he would have the patent rights in his machine?—That would be another view to take of it, but not if the Government purchased the patent rights. I do not think one patent would accomplish all that is wanted. There are three things required, and you might have to divide the bonus, which would not be very much to each.

314. *The Chairman.*] You think the amount of the bonus should be divided?—I do, to accomplish the different ends.

315. We have taken that point. Now, as to the grading of the flax?—In the first place, the advantage of grading would be this: that, with Government inspection, our flax would have a certain value that it does not possess at the present time. When they reach London the bales are not opened—it does not pay to open and inspect bales of flax the same as wool, for this reason: the cost of flax is less in value; and, in the next place, it requires almost an expert to bale it up as before, and rather than go to the trouble and expense of that the buyers discount the chances. According to the statement of the chairman of a flax-millers' meeting which took place at Raglan, in the Auckland District, he met Mr. Wood, and asked him the question, "Supposing we could guarantee the quality of every bale, what is your opinion with regard to the difference in value?"