produced] that all good canvas is made from; it is Italian flax. There is more of this particular fibre used than was mentioned in the morning paper of yesterday. It is there stated that 50,000 tons was as much as we could get rid of. I have the information from "Cassell's History" that in 1871 the imports were four times that quantity. Up to the present time the imports of Great Britain, without America, are thirty millions sterling worth.

481. What I want to ascertain from you is your own knowledge as to the uses this flax could be put to at Home if the fibre could be improved?—Canvas, in the first place, would be one of the many things the fibre could be used for if sent to England.

482. You say it could be used also for making shirting?—Yes. It is very cold for shirting, but it wears well.

483. Do you think you would get a largely increased price for the fibre if it were used for canvas at Home?—At the present time the price for rough Italian fibre is £34 a ton. That quality runs from 5¼d. to 6d. a pound in the bale in a fine-dressed state.

484. Do you think that a machine could be invented that would bring out our flax as fine as this Italian fibre?—Yes, I am positive. If we could take the gum away by scraping it would compete in the London market against the Italian fibre to-morrow.

485. *The Chairman.*] For all the purposes for which Italian fibre is used?—Yes. When the tow is taken from the Italian fibre it realises from £50 to £56 a ton to use for fine work.

486. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] And you assert that the New Zealand flax would take that position?—Yes.

487. *The Chairman.*] And an unlimited market?—Yes. I have been in the service of my father in England, under his supervision, and where he takes his knowledge from is from the Gourouck Rope-work Company, now at Port Glasgow. There are as many as two thousand hands making canvas for this particular firm from this Italian fibre, and I have received letters from him telling me that I ought to push the New Zealand fibre, and try to put it into the English market against the Italian fibre. He considers that it makes a clearer article than the Italian flax.

488. You do not know of New Zealand flax ever having been utilised for canvas?—It has been utilised after the gum is extracted. It makes splendid canvas.

489. It would require new machinery to expel the gum without destroying the fibre?—Yes, without deteriorating the fibre.

490. Now, we want information on the question of classification: do you consider it necessary that flax should be classified before leaving New Zealand?—I do; strongly I do.

491. Can you tell the Committee how many classes it should be divided into?—I think we should have only three classes, although I have seen as many as four or five classes. I have seen some deplorable stuff, as black almost as coal, in the sheds. Even to-day I could show it to you.

492. You think, practically, that three classes would be sufficient?—Yes; I would class them in this way: I should call the really good fibre superfine, the next fine, the next medium, and the next common. I should also suggest that each miller should register his brand, so that we should get to know their flax thoroughly.

493. It has been suggested that the only place where inspection could be carried out would be at the mills: do you think that practicable?—Well, my suggestion would be that the fibre should go to the Harbour Board to be put into their sheds for shipment, and be inspected there thoroughly—one bale out of each shipment from each miller. A report should be written upon it, and the miller informed where any defect was in it, so that he could try and improve it. Give him advice upon it, and not do as is now done.

494. Could you get at the fair average contents of a bale without opening it thoroughly?—Well, if you have got the miller's brand registered you could make an examination without pulling his bales to pieces. A view of it would be sufficient.

495. But, still, you wish us to understand that before you really knew what the brand was you would have to open the bales thoroughly to ascertain?—One bale, or perhaps two, in each shipment.

496. Would one out of five be sufficient?—Oh yes, less than that. The sampling of the bales in the sheds puts them out of uniform shape. Not having a scutcher to touch the hanks up again, to make them look as they ought to be, necessitates their being put into the press here ruffled to a certain extent.

497. *Major Steward.*] Proper men would be kept for inspection with proper appliances?—Yes, that would be required, to put up the flax again in a proper manner, so as to get a proper price for the miller.

498. *The Chairman.*] Is care taken at the wharf in sending distinctive parcels Home as taken from the mills?—No.

499. They are not sufficiently branded?—No. The millers alter the brand if they get the name of a bad brand.

500. You consider that all these difficulties would be met by a proper classification and registration of the brands at each mill?—I do.

501. Have you seen flax leave here in a moist or damp state?—I have seen it shipped here, and have received it in the Old Country, and in Sydney, in a damp state, and as hard as a board.

502. Was the flax much deteriorated by that moisture?—Yes. I have seen fibre, only thirty days after leaving the mill, being shipped from the Harbour Board sheds here with a musty smell. That fibre, being in the ship's hold for four months going to England, loses about 20 per cent. of its strength. It heats to a certain extent, and turns colour through the damp; it turns to a dark cast, a lead colour almost. This fibre, when taken out for rope-spinning, would fall away in the hackling process. It would turn out lumpy yarn, and not a glossy rope in any way; and the sale of it would be impaired fully 20 per cent. It would lose another 10 per cent. in the working of the fibre.