

the ends of the hanks together. In some cases there is one down here [indicating] and another up there, and when you come to hackle it it is all topsy-turvy. The hanks are not kept even together. I should suggest that in drying the finishing should be done inside, under shelter. The fibre takes oil splendidly.

656. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Have you ever known flax after having been put through the strippers to be soaked in clear running water for twenty-four hours, then taken out and passed through two indiarubber rollers similar to mangles, and then dried?—No, I have never seen it done like that.

MONDAY, 4TH AUGUST, 1890.

THOMAS JOHN WILLIAM GALE, Manager to Messrs. Johnston and Co., Wellington, examined.

657. *The Chairman.*] Your firm, Mr. Gale, has purchased a considerable quantity of flax?—Yes.

658. It has been stated by witnesses we have had examined before us that the merchants have been very careless in purchasing flax; that they have not sufficiently examined it. Is that so?—No; I am not prepared to admit that.

659. Is it your opinion, Mr. Gale, that a system of Government inspection would assist in the development of the industry?—Yes. We have been inspecting for the last twelve months.

660. A system of private inspection?—Yes, the Inspector giving us a certificate as to the quality. We have had to make very considerable rejections; hence my reason for not admitting that we had been careless.

661. Has the inspection been made in conjunction with other firms?—No; wholly and solely on our own account. We sold flax of a certain quality, and we supported our judgment of the quality by an independent expert's certificate.

662. This independent expert would not be a man known in commercial circles at Home?—Oh, no; he is a what we consider a capable man, who knows flax here as well as anybody can know it.

663. Merely an arrangement in making your own purchases?—Yes.

664. And do we understand you to say that a Governmental inspection would be far superior to such a system as you mention?—Very much.

665. *Major Steward.*] Because it would be a general system?—Yes; an Inspector using a Government stamp would materially assist the trade.

666. *The Chairman.*] Can you give the Committee any idea of how many classes you would recommend?—I recommend three classes.

667. Generally speaking, to your knowledge, is the flax shipped in a sound, dry condition?—Yes; but we have had to throw out flax on several occasions in consequence of its being wet.

668. Have the underwriters objected to take flax in a wet condition?—Oh, certainly. The surveyor looks at it; he objects, and calls the owner's attention to it.

669. Do you find flax is damaged by being made wet?—Yes; it makes the flax black on its arrival Home.

670. Do the underwriters object to any danger of fire owing to the dampness?—I do not know. I cannot answer that question.

671. Not to your knowledge?—Not to my knowledge. There are different opinions on that subject. Experiments have been made in the colony, and a bale has been saturated with water and pressed for a considerable time, and no fire or combustion has resulted.

672. It has merely damaged it in quality?—Yes.

673. Then, I would ask you, why do the underwriters object? They do not pay anything for partial damage, do they?—I do not think they insure flax from New Zealand to America or London with average. But the Americans do it. They can insure their flax against all risks.

674. Would that include discolouration from moisture?—Yes, if shipped under a clean bill of lading—that is, if the bill of lading did not indicate that the bales of flax were wet or damaged.

675. I think it was stated to the Committee that a quantity of flax was shipped on board one of the vessels, and, owing to a port-hole being open, it was damaged in transit?

676. But the Committee was informed no claim was allowed?—No; that would be the negligence of the ship. A ship has no right to keep a port-hole open.

677. Have you formed any opinion about the advisability of offering a bonus?—I have.

678. Do you consider the Government would be justified in offering a bonus for a new class of machine to improve the fibre?—That would depend on circumstances. If the improvement of the fibre would mean its application to another manufacture, such as linen, then I should recommend a bonus, but if it is to improve the fibre for binder-twine the Government would be wasting their money.

679. *Mr. Hamlin.*] In inspecting the flax before you send it Home, have you been in the habit of opening all the bales?—No; we take a percentage of the number of bales which arrive. We sample it by taking a hank out of several bales, say five bales out of twenty or thirty; and if those hanks pass we pass the shipment; but if they do not pass in quality we cause several bales to be opened, and make a very critical examination. Sometimes we discover dampness in this way.

680. Do you think that percentage would be sufficient if the Government were to have an inspection?—I think that percentage would be quite sufficient.

681. Sufficient to warrant the Government in having their stamp affixed?—Yes.

682. *Major Steward.*] The reason you think the percentage would be sufficient, I presume, is that that percentage would be opened at hap-hazard?—Yes.

683. And it would follow that the chance would be that the other bales would be similar to those that had been selected. If the percentage comes out all right there is no necessity to go to