

the same tints and lustres as silk, and it is likely to be used for the purpose of admixture with silk.

799. You state that a peculiarity of the *Phormium tenax* is that it takes a brilliant dye. I have seen within the last year or two great objection taken to the bales used for our wool, that in the case of the more valuable wool the manufacturers complain that the loose ends of the jute get inextricably mixed up with the wool, and when it comes to be manufactured and dyed the cloth presents all sorts of little points that will not take the dye?—I understand that jute will not take dye in the same way as phormium.

800. Therefore if we found it profitable to make our bales of phormium, that evil would disappear?—It might to a very large extent.

801. With the more valuable wools it was even insisted on that we should line our bales with paper or linen, so that it is really a matter of practical moment?—The woollen mills have had great trouble in regard to the stubble ends of the fibre, a difficulty sometimes to know what they were or how they were to be got rid of; it refuses to take the dye, or takes a pale brown dye generally, and ruins the cloth.

802. So that in the case of valuable wool it is really a very important matter?—Yes.

803. *The Chairman.*] With respect to the question of bonus, do you think that a bonus should be given by the Government to improve the production of the flax fibre?—You put it abstractly, as to whether a bonus should be offered?

804. Do you think a bonus would be attended with any good?—Well, taking my experience of all past bonuses offered, and they all came through my hands,—I keep the bonus records,—I think they have not led to any solid advantage. In some few cases the bonus has been earned; but, as a rule, in many cases industries have been developed without a bonus at all. The bonus system in this colony, in my opinion, has not had a very encouraging result.

805. *Mr. Walker.*] Are our bonuses advertised in England generally?—I do not think so, as a rule, except in the *Gazettes*, which are to be seen in the Agent-General's office.

806. Suppose a bonus was advertised in a scientific journal?—Some of them have been very largely advertised, and the conditions stated. In some cases bonuses have been offered in order to attract outside skill and capital. As a rule a bonus has been offered in order to start some particular industry in the colony, and, of course, in that case, it is not so advantageous to seek outside assistance directly.

807. *The Chairman.*] Do we understand you to say that it is not necessary?—I think the question is put in such a general form that it is difficult to answer. If it were a question as to offering a specific bonus for improved machines, or improved processes of preparation of the fibre, it might be answered; but to put an abstract question as to offering a bonus for the improvement of flax is, in my opinion, too wide a question for any one to answer.

808. I will put it in a different form. Can you suggest any form of offering a bonus that would be productive of good results—say, for a number of bales produced of a certain value, or by improved machinery, or by improved chemical process? Can you suggest any form?—Do you mean the flax such as now exported—the utilisation of the wild flax of the country?

809. That is the way I should put it: a bonus for improving and utilising the wild flax.—I can see some advantages that might arise from a bonus, but I should like to think over that question. To answer the question really means the consideration of the forms and conditions that would surround a bonus.

810. Will you assist the Committee by sketching out some conditions?—I will. If well made the flax pays remarkably well now. I do not know whether as to the quality of the flax it would be necessary to give it any special encouragement. You would find all the better mills able to take a bonus at once, unless you look for some very much larger production than is at present being achieved.

811. I think in your report generally you state that the present system of beating destroys the fibre to a certain extent?—Yes, for any other purpose than manila, or white, ropemaking. If the machines in present use are properly adjusted, and sufficient time given to overcome the difference of thickness of leaf prior to the feeding; if the leaves are selected, and put through not in double thickness; if the whole process is kept under water and the fibre is never allowed to dry until its final handling. I think any improvement in the process does not depend so much upon the machines as upon the care and skill with which the whole process is conducted. The best course would be to take, as an instance, some of the processes described in the book. Take the working of the mill of Nelson Brothers, Napier, 29th May, 1871, page 90. They took every precaution, and produced a thoroughly good article that is suited to the market. There is no possibility by a rapid process to produce a great quantity in a given time of a yellow fibre from phormium, and of making it absolutely equal in strength and lasting quality with manila. That form of fibre, for that purpose, must always grade below manila in the market, simply because it has a greater power of absorbing water, and especially sea-water, in the raw state. The experiments made in former years show that, by applying oil to the fibre, a fibre can be made equally resisting with manila; but, unfortunately, we cannot oil the phormium fibre and put it on board a ship; the risk is too great.

812. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] You are of opinion that, if we dressed the flax carefully with the machinery we have at the present time, it will take as high a stand as is required in the market?—Yes, to compete with manila. I believe that, by thorough adjustment, and thorough attention to the careful carrying out of every matter of detail, we can do as well as it is possible to do.

813. Then, so far as that is concerned, a bonus is not required?—No, not for that purpose.

814. *The Chairman.*] There are other forms of machines—scraping machines. There is Pownall's machine?—I like Pownall's machine.

815. Would it be worth while to offer a bonus for improvement of machines of that kind?—