834. Oh, no. The classification would be made and the brand put on by the Government Inspector, at the cost of the producer.—I am quite in favour of that.

835. The Government would not take any responsibility. The Inspector would act as an arbitrator: he would fix the standard, which would be provided for him, and he would say that the flax produced should be up to that standard.—I believe that could be done. It would be found in practice that it could be done most easily by inspecting the flax at the mills, because it would be to the interest of the flax-producers to be quite fair, and always to have their returns of flax agreeing with the classification that they had adopted. Of course it might in some cases be necessary to examine the flax at the port of shipment, but that would be only where there was reason to suspect that there was any unfairness or any irregularity in the branding—anything purposely or intentionally irregular.

836. *Mr. Walker.*] With regard to cultivated flax, are the climates of both islands equally suitable for the growth of profitable fibre; would there be a great deal of change in the character of the fibre produced from the extreme south and that produced from the extreme north of New Zealand?—I should expect a difference between the east and the west almost more than between the north and south, because the sudden alternations of frost and sunshine are really more unfavourable than the conditions of moisture or dryness. I think we should expect a greater difference, perhaps, between the flax grown at Inglewood, one of the moistest climates in the whole of New Zealand, or, in fact, flax grown along the Taranaki side, and that grown on the Napier side. I should expect a greater difference in the fibre grown at these two places than you would get in fibre grown in dry and wet situations in the extreme south or the extreme north.

837. *The Chairman.*] What would be the character of the climate at the Bluff?—It is not so wet as Inglewood.

838. We heard in evidence yesterday of a shipment of twenty or thirty bales of *Phormium tenax* having been shipped to London from St. Michaels. [Letter from Mr. Duncan read.] Is there any other country that could produce flax that would be a rival to our own phormium?—I always thought the produce of phormium would be greater in New Zealand than in any other country. I can find out how the sample produced has been prepared.

839. Does it appear to have been dried in the open air, or dried in the shed?—It has very little colour.

840. Have there been any chemicals applied in its preparation?—I shall examine a portion of the sample.

Mr. Frederick Bull examined.

841. *The Chairman.*] You are a flax-miller?—I have been a flax-miller in Canterbury.

842. Have you had a great deal of experience?—As a practical miller, about two years.

843. You now have invented a flax stripper?—Yes, a scraping machine; it is an improvement on the strippers in use.

844. Is it on the same principle as Pownall's machine?—No, it is not an adaptation of his. My object was to produce a simple scraping-machine which would not be elaborate in construction, but which would be a commercial success.

845. Have you a drawing of your machine?—I have not a drawing here. It is very simple. Following up Dr. Hector's remarks as to the improvement of machines, it is evident that a machine which had a very great number of scraping-bars close together would produce the nearest practical approach to scraping.

846. Can you tell the Committee what is the cost of passing flax through your process?—I think, in favourable circumstances, about £10 to £11 a ton. Of course, the winter season makes a great difference. I have been trying to get a quantity put through in Canterbury by a gentleman who has my machine, but he has had such weather that he has not been able to get it through with complete results. It was tried at Johnston and Co.'s Mill, Rangitikei, and I have here the report upon that trial. It took about a little over 6 tons of green flax to make a ton of fibre, as against nearly 8 tons that were stripped by other machines from the same locality. There was a saving of about 1½ tons of green flax.

847. Do we understand that the cost of preparing the flax by your machine would be £11 a ton as against the usual cost of £14?—Yes, the cost by my machine would be £10 to £11, as against £14 to £15.

848. How much has been produced by your machine?—Some two or three tons of fibre.

849. It has not been used much as yet?—No; it has had only experimental trials. There are so many small improvements suggested, as is the case with all new machinery. It is still being improved upon, not in principle but in small matters. They are all quite satisfied as to the principle, and as to the saving in green flax. [Witness produced copy of report of first trial, written by the manager of Messrs. Johnston's mill.]

850. Is it an expensive machine?—It will cost about £27 10s., as against £20 the cost of the ordinary machine.

851. This sample of flax was provided by your machine?—Yes; the first day's work. It is crude in comparison with the flax turned out now by the machine.

852. Have any chemicals been applied to this?—None whatever.

853. Nothing but the process that follows the ordinary use of a flax-machine?—That is all; it is finished by the ordinary process.

854. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] You claim for your machine that flax can be produced by it at £3 per ton less cost than by the ordinary machine, and that you can obtain from £2 to £3 more for fibre?—Well, that was the cabled result of the experts' report obtained by the Agent-General—that the prepared flax was worth from £22 to £23 per ton, as against £19.

855. If your machine will turn out fibre at a lower rate, you are of opinion that it will compete with sisal?—That is so.