

384. If inspection is necessary, that inspection should take place at the chief ports?—Yes, certainly, if there is to be inspection at all.

385. Do you think that Governmental inspection would lead to a better class of fibre being produced?—Well, I could not say, unless it was to stop the sale of the bad. That is the only way in which it could be done. The merchants are, I think, greatly to blame for the purchasing of bad flax.

386. Because they purchase indiscriminately, I suppose you mean?—Yes, and at a general price. There are few of them judges of flax. There is a general price, and they take all that comes, without any difference.

387. Do you sell your flax to the merchants, or do you ship it on your own account?—I once sent a parcel to England; and Captain Ashby bought a parcel and took to London, realising £52 per ton. It was generally all sold in the colony.

388. *Major Steward.*] Do you know for what purpose it was used?—For rope-making.

389. And binder-twine?—No, there was no binder-twine made then.

390. *The Chairman.*] Have you made any attempt to get rid of the gum known to exist in the flax?—Yes, but only by steeping in water.

391. *Major Steward.*] Have you ever seen any of the flax prepared by the Maoris?—Yes.

392. Is it not superior to what is turned out by the mills?—I believe it is.

393. Very much so?—Yes.

394. Is the process used by the Maoris one of scraping?—It may be called a kind of scraping.

395. Now the process used is a process of beating in the machines?—Yes.

396. Does not that tend to break the fibre?—Yes, certainly it would break it a little.

397. If a machine could be invented for preparing the flax by a process of scraping, is it not likely it would be better, supposing it could be done?—The fibre is all through the leaf: to scrape it you must scrape one side. You must strike hard to get the vegetable matter in the leaf broken.

398. *Mr. Hamlin.*] You were engaged for a number of years in dressing flax?—Yes.

399. And, I believe, have been very successful in dressing flax?—Yes.

400. The machine, you state, is Mr. Price's manufacture: was it not a machine which was virtually introduced by yourself originally?—Yes.

401. Before any other machines were brought out?—No; there were other machines, but they did not make such good work.

402. Have you any objection to stating your mode of preparing flax right through?—I have no objection at all. When the flax comes from the field I generally keep it for two days to take the harshness out of it: it gets softer and more pliable. I do so before putting it through the machine.

403. *The Chairman.*] Would it be kept two days both in summer and winter?—Yes, at all seasons. It was kept in the dry mill to take the harshness off it after it was cut.

404. *Mr. Hamlin.*] What then did you do?—I put it through the machine, and from there to the washing. Every hank when it came from the machine was put into water.

405. *The Chairman.*] For how long?—I put the fibre into troughs as it was dressed, and left it there till the next morning.

406. You soaked it twenty-four hours?—Not exactly twenty-four hours; but there would be no harm if it were left twenty-four hours. It must all be kept in clean water, the water running through it. Then it is taken out and dried; taken in and put into a house and let lie there for two or three months, when it is scutched.

407. Did it necessitate very large buildings to house the flax for three months?—Yes, it required pretty large sheds. You could not make good work without large sheds.

408. It has been stated that in some cases flax has been taken for scutching in a damp state: is that advisable or not?—No, it is not. I never saw any taken damp. I have seen it taken dry from the field and scutched; then it is too brittle. Flax is never so good when scutched direct from the field.

409. Then, you do not store the flax for the purpose of making it dry?—Oh, no; it is dried in the field.

410. You put it together in large quantities, so that it gets moist with its own moisture?—It never gets moist at all. There is a sort of sweating after it is packed up when it comes in from the field. There is a little dampness comes over it, but it gets all right in a very short time.

411. *Mr. Hamlin.*] I think you wished the Committee to understand that your reason for stacking the flax away and allowing it to remain for a couple of months was that, when put through the scutcher, it is more readily dressed and becomes a better article?—Yes; it is more pliable and soft. When scutched from the field direct it is hard and brittle.

412. You were the manager, I believe, of a manufacturing establishment at Home for years before you came to the colony?—Yes; I was well acquainted with the work at Home.

413. *The Chairman.*] You were an expert in flax-dressing?—No, not in dressing it, but in manufacturing it.

414. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Then, from your experience, do you consider that the flax will ever be dressed so as to be used for the manufacture of textile fabrics, or not?—No.

415. Can you give any reason why you say no?—The quality of it. It is a hemp and not a flax at all.

416. Then, even supposing the machinery would turn the flax out equal to that prepared by the Natives, do you not consider that it could be used?—No, it could not.

417. *The Chairman.*] Were you a rope-maker?—No; I was a spinner of finer quality of flax. The rope-makers only use hemp and manila.

418. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Then, so far as you are personally concerned, your opinion is that no bonus should be offered for improving machinery?—I could not say; a bonus might do good.