

419. Have you any idea in what way machinery could be improved, with good results to the colony generally?—No, I could not say, unless a new machine can improve the quality of flax going Home. There is so much bad flax goes Home that people get tired of it, and will not be bothered with it.

420. In that case, would you not consider that inspection at the various ports of shipment would bring about an improvement?—It is quite possible it might. The bad flax would still come for all that.

421. Supposing such a thing were established as inspection at various ports, it would be under Government control, and they would virtually say as to whether flax was of third-rate or fourth-rate quality: would that not be a check on the careless manufacture of the fibre?—I am afraid not. The merchants are the only persons who could check it. For bad flax a low price will be paid and for good flax a good price; but when bought the flax is all sent away.

422. Supposing you were sending it to the London or American market, would it not tend to improve the price?—I cannot say. They would give a good price for the good and a poor price for the bad. Bad flax is not fit to make a rope.

423. *The Chairman.*] What is the effect of too much moisture in the flax?—It will rot it, and it will get very black if it is too long exposed to wet.

424. Do you know from your own experience that it fires itself?—It heats a little.

425. But it will not fire?—I do not believe any wet would make it fire. I have seen the flax in all its stages, but never saw it fire.

426. *Mr. Walker.*] Do you know how the flax is taken out of the hold of a ship?—I have never seen it taken out.

427. Did you never hear of any reports from Home, from the docks there, as to the state in which the flax comes out of the hold?—I have heard that it sometimes comes out wet.

428. But never fired?—No, never.

429. You apparently blame the merchants, or rather the millers, for the bad flax that is shipped?—It is the merchants who ought to stop shipping bad flax. There are hundreds of millers who do not know good flax when they see it. They do not know the quality. They are not judges of the quality or value. They prefer selling a bad flax at a lower price to the merchants, as it pays them far better. There is less trouble with it in every way.

430. And if the merchants would only buy good fibre it would prevent the evil?—Yes, certainly, or else give a very low price for the bad.

431. Is not that operating now?—No, I do not think it is to a great extent.

432. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Have you ever grown flax for cutting, or have you only cut the natural?—Just the natural.

433. You do not think it would pay to grow flax?—Well, I have never required to grow it.

434. You say that you are a spinner, and you think from your own knowledge that even the Maori-dressed flax is not fine enough to spin into fabrics?—No.

435. You do not think it is even fine enough to make canvas?—No; I do not think it is fit for ships' canvas. I once got a small parcel of New Zealand fibre in Fife. Having a small order for merchant canvas we mixed it with European flax. I think about one-sixteenth part of the New Zealand flax was mixed with European flax. It was detected in the canvas, which was of very heavy quality. It was detected by the merchant, and he would not trust it.

436. *The Chairman.*] It was condemned?—Yes.

437. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] It would be condemned before. The manila would strengthen the canvas?—It would not strengthen the canvas; it would not stand the weather like flax.

438. You think it is not good enough to make canvas, no matter what care is taken in the preparation of the fibre?—No, I do not think it is. Navy canvas should be made of the finest quality of flax.

439. Even for horse-covers and tarpaulins you would think it not suitable?—I think it would be, certainly. It would make scrim.

440. Have you any idea of the value of the raw material that is used now for scrim, canvas, and tarpaulins?—Well, I could not say what the value is now.

441. Then, do you think if the flax were used for that purpose they would get a higher price for it?—You would not get a higher price for bagging.

442. Even for horse-covers and tarpaulins made out of the strong fibre without jute?—I cannot say.

443. You do not know whether it would bring more money if used for the purposes just mentioned?—I do not think it would. I think rope and twine would be the most suitable thing you could put it to.

444. Do you think that the fibre of flax is as strong as the fibre of manila?—If it is well dressed it is as strong but not so pliable as manila, and would not last so long.

445. Do you think the dressing would improve that inherent weakness of the fibre?—I do not think any dressing would do away with the defect.

446. You say the merchant can make more money out of the poorer flax?—No, the manufacturer.

447. *The Chairman.*] Do you know the fibre you have in your hand [sample of flax handed witness by Mr. Morrison]?—I cannot say; it appears to me to be some young leaves.

448. Do you recognise it as any flax now in use in the Old Country?—It appears very soft. You cannot speak of a sample like this. With so much handling it gets different altogether. It looks very fine.

449. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Did you find any difficulty in removing the gum from the fibre after it was dressed?—Washing is the only thing I could get to do it.

450. You find the washing removes it all?—Yes, it cleans it quite properly.