

54. That is, to work by?—Yes, a sample in each grade.

55. You also appear to be of the same opinion as the last witness, and you were speaking for the Flax-millers' Association?—Yes.

56. You are of opinion that there is too great a range in the grades?—Yes.

57. Speaking of what the Minister just said in regard to the weight of fibre you get from, say, a ton of green flax, does it make any difference the kind of land it is grown on?—That is what we should like to have proved. Some flax grown on swamps produces more fibre than other flax grown on similar swamps.

58. There is a larger weight of fibre in flax grown on light land than in the case of flax grown on swamp land?—We frequently find a different quality of flax grown on light land, so cannot tell whether the increase is due to the land or the species of flax.

59. You spoke about the different qualities—about there being no check on the different qualities and check in other countries?—We propose that there should be a brand inside the bale. Under the present system each miller puts his brand on a batten, and we suggest that there should be a Government stamp put on the same batten; under the present system they have simply a small tag, which can be torn off quite easily. I recognised yesterday, when I heard Mr. Raymond's evidence, that it was very easy to remove those tags. He gave a case of a line which fetched a much higher price when the tag was removed.

60. *Mr. McLachlan.*] Only one thing occurred to me. Have the Natives no further information than the Europeans about the quality of the flax?—I have inquired from them, but I cannot get any information. In their own dressing process they only choose the very centre leaves. We think it weakens the plant considerably. I heard years ago that the Maoris knew the proper quality of flax to produce the finest fibre.

61. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] About these battens—they often drop out?—Yes, but the tag inside would be a proper check on that. They might drop out during the actual dumping process, but after that they cannot drop out. Of course, you must have the brand on the outside for the convenience of the distributors, but we think there should be a brand inside.

*Mr. Frost* (previous witness): If you would allow me to give a little information to the gentleman. The Government issued a work by Dr. Hector on the varieties of flax some twenty or thirty years ago.

62. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] Could you tell from the green flax what fibre it would turn out?—I can go on the hill and tell what will be a good cracker for my whip.

ALFRED SEIFERT, Flax-miller, Palmerston North, examined. (No. 4.)

*Witness:* I practically agree with all the previous witness said, and you could practically take his evidence as mine. I consider standard bales necessary. In regard to samples, it is not necessary that every person should be continually handling the hemp. In most cases there could be protection from handling it too often. You could make the miller pay £1 for the sample. Next as to the points in grading. Of course, we were thoroughly unanimous that there should be ten points and not fifteen in "fair" as at the present time, and only five in "superior," and we think it would considerably help the quality if the points were reduced to ten. The next matter I wish to speak about is in regard to condemned hemp for export. I cannot see why hemp should be condemned for export. I never sent down hemp that was condemned. One time I went very near it with hemp that had had a flood over it, but, fortunately, it passed as "common." I do not think that shipping this very inferior hemp would be detrimental. We have at the present time five grades. Another point some of us have spoken about is whether the present system of grading is brought under the notice of manufacturers throughout the world. I dare say complaints have frequently reached the colony about our style of dressing our hemp. We should be pleased if we could get them when they arrive.

*Hon. Mr. Duncan:* If you appoint a place, that could be done.

*Witness:* In regard to the raw material—that, as Mr. Gardner points out, is getting a very serious question. In all the swamps that twenty years ago cut large quantities of flax the crop is getting lighter; but we do not know the best kind to plant—that is, what will mature the quickest and give a high percentage of fibre. Quick maturity is just as important as a high percentage of fibre. I think instruction to millers would be a very good thing, but I do not see that it would do any good unless the Department conducted experiments. If the Government put on an instructor and he made experiments, I think you would find that the oldest and best millers would be the very first to ask such experts for advice.

GEORGE SIMPSON, Flax-miller, Foxton, examined. (No. 5.)

*Witness:* The remarks that you have heard I fully indorse. Of course, the resolutions that we brought down carry conviction, but I want to get a little further ahead than that, and I want to give to you a business proposition. I think it is only fair, where a contract is made between two parties such as a Grader and a flax-miller, that there should be some form of redress. If there is a disagreement at the present time there is nothing to do but sit down and take the Grader's opinion. I think there should be an arbitrator appointed to judge between the Grader and the miller. It seems to be manifestly unfair that we cannot get any redress, and I think that that should be taken seriously in hand. Another thing—with all due respect to the Graders—I think we want a man at the head of the Department who is thoroughly cognisant of the needs of the manufacturers. As regards the grading, we have no sample to go by—nothing to grade up to—and the result is that the millers do not grade up to anything. It has been said, and, I think, with justice, that Graders are put on, and we know absolutely nothing about them. We want a man at the head of affairs who knows what the manufacturers want. As a matter of fact, now you get your returns sent up from the Graders—you will get 84-points stuff and 60-points stuff,