

ment had such an inspector as has been suggested in connection with the staff, in the case of a miller complaining that he was getting such a bad leaf that he could not possibly manufacture a good article out of it, it would be the business of the inspector or instructor to see this diseased leaf, and see if it were so. If that were done, we should have somebody at our backs who would help us. At the present time many of us are entirely at the mercy of the green-flax owners, and we cannot help ourselves. I will illustrate my contention. A syndicate of three or four buy an area of flax, and put in a flax-manager who knows practically nothing about his business. His duty is to supply green flax to the millers. He calls for tenders for cutting the flax in areas. Generally the lowest tender—the tender which cannot possibly pay—is accepted. The consequence is the contractor employs his cutters, but, not getting remuneration for his own labour, he has got to beat down the employees. The result is that they cut the flax, raupo, rushes, and any rubbish that comes in their way. This is bundled up, goes to the miller, and the millers have got to take it, for the expense of weighing back and deducting the rubbish would cost more than to take it and throw it into the rubbish-heap. If the inspectors knew this, and green-swamp owners knew that leaf came under Government inspection, they would be very careful in the way they managed green-flax swamps, and millers would be able to turn out a better article. I mentioned just now the consequences that would arise if the Government did not go far enough, or farther than at the present time. By that I want to emphasize the necessity of the getting of this evidence abroad in regard to our hemp exported there, and the appointment of instructors to help the miller to get a good standard quality of flax. I am certain that if we could get at the value of our flax, we have got the fibre out of which as much can be made as out of any fibre that can be grown in any part of the world.

53. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] I notice that the witness has stated that he got the same grade last Christmas and now?—The same hank and line.

54. It is evident from your evidence that the Graders know their business?—They do.

55. What would be the difference in price between "fair" and "good fair" if no points were shown? If the Grader simply stated "fair" would the merchants make a reduction of £2 10s. per ton between the two grades?—No; they would buy according to quality, and would not deduct it.

56. The loss to the miller is due to the loss of points?—The loss is the miller's. He brings a line which would be a "good fair" line in the hands of the merchant, and that is brought into "fair" perhaps by the loss of two points. There are so many points for scutching, stripping, finish, strength. Supposing a point is lost on the finish and one on the scutching. Neither of these is sufficient to make it bad for manufacturing purposes, yet the loss of the two points is quite sufficient to throw it out of its value.

57. You say they do not take advantage of the points?—They do take advantage of the points, but if the grading certificate did not appear we should go to the merchant and the merchant could not detect the difference. If it was not classed at all they would not know the difference. It would go through as "good fair," but the Grader on the one point throws it back £2 10s. per ton, and I have not the slightest doubt but that they take advantage of the certificate on the other side, and we cannot get back to where we were some years ago on the value of our hemp.

58. You are a ropemaker as well as a flax-miller?—Yes.

59. Can you utilise inferior grades in ropemaking?—Yes.

60. Do you think it is wise or otherwise to send Home those inferior grades—that shipping them Home would have a bad effect on the flax industry generally?—Most decidedly.

61. You think it unwise?—Most decidedly I think it unwise to allow it. As a ropemaker, when I am using an inferior line I would use it for what is called "hard cord." It would be completely buried out of sight, and nobody would be able to detect it.

62. *Mr. McLachlan.*] What about strength?—It would not be there. It would break when submitted to a heavy strain. I would approve of entirely shutting out the low grade from export.

63. *The Chairman.*] You made reference to the high grade?—Yes, 75-point stuff.

64. Would there have been an extensive market for that high-grade flax?—I am not in a position to try that.

65. You think the experiment is worth trying?—I certainly wish I had the money to go Home and exploit it for myself.

66. Reference has been made to the possibility of removing tags, and it has been recommended that there be a parchment tag on the outside, and one in the centre of the bale corresponding with that?—A very good idea, indeed.

67. *Mr. Bollard.*] You strongly condemned the sending of condemned flax out of the country?—Yes, for manufacture or in the manufactured state.

68. You are a ropemaker. In consequence of its being condemned and not being sent out, you can buy it at your own price?—Yes; practically; quite so.

69. Consequently it is a great advantage to you as a ropemaker that it should not be sent out?—If the low-grade flax were not allowed to be sent out I should not be able to buy it, because there would be none manufactured.

70. Do you say that inferior flax is solely due to want of knowledge on the part of the manufacturer?—To that and carelessness.

71. If there was a demand for it in the Commonwealth of Australia, would you not favour its being sent there?—If there is any demand it could only be from competition with New Zealand ropemakers.

72. If it sold for £8 or £9 per ton in the colony, and it could be sold outside for £15 or £16, would you not think it would help the miller to allow it to be exported?—It would not help him at all.