

40. I do not see quite how it could be unless any of that was soaked up into the centre of the bale?—Of course, in a sailing-ship with damp wool stowed away that would be so, but although the water was not running always, still that bale was wet and had received no fresh additions of water to it.

41. But still when you mentioned certain bales on which water had been running for some time, the inference that I drew was that those bales had been discovered wet on the voyage and had not been dealt with?—No, sir. Of course, during the time we were going through the tropics there would be very little water going down there, and that would be the time that the wool would increase in temperature; and after that wool had increased in temperature the water that came on to it after we got into the colder climate would not heat it.

42. But there would be water washing all the time?—But it would not go over the lip of this coaming until the ship commenced to roll.

43. *Captain Blackburne.*] When she did begin to roll again the water would be colder and reduce the temperature?—If the temperature had been increased it would reduce it a little.

44. If you do not believe in spontaneous combustion in wool, how do you account for the "Gothic" fire? I suppose you have had some talk with Captain Moffatt about it?—Yes.

45. And there is evidence the fire was in the centre of the bales, and the pack—the outside part—of many of the bales was free from any fire?—I mean to say that if there is a foreign substance in a bale it might cause spontaneous combustion; but clean greasy wool, even although damp, will not cause spontaneous combustion in my estimation. Of course, scientific men may be able to say that that is not according to facts, but that is my opinion.

46. *Mr. Foster.*] You say you require something besides clean greasy wool?—Yes.

47. Very well, you see "a bale of wool" does not mean all fine fleecy wool; it may be unsound stuff, and in regard to that do you think that is not likely to fire?—I am a little doubtful of this spontaneous combustion. I think that this foreign matter might be the cause.

48. But have you seen any wool in which there is any foreign matter?—Yes.

49. Have you carried it on the ships?—Yes. I would not say it was very bad, but I have seen it, and you could certainly smell it—it was bad enough for that.

50. If you could smell it, would you think it was damp at the time?—What I saw was not damp—it was more of a cake. Of course, the bale had been pressed or dumped, but this was more flattened out; but I can understand that if that had water on it it might increase the temperature.

51. Then if that sort of wool is sometimes shipped, it would not surprise you if a fire originated in that class of material?—No, as far as I know.

52. Have you any supervision over the way the wool arrives at your store—does it come under your notice?—Yes.

53. Have you ever noticed any trouble from insufficient or bad sheeting of trucks?—Occasionally we get that. We sometimes get a damp bale that we can almost attribute to leaky tarpaulins.

54. And do you regard those occasions as indicating anything worthy of serious complaint?—We have often complained to the Railway authorities about giving us bad tarpaulins; but they turn round and say, We have nothing to do with country side stations in loading the wool or covering it up: we leave the tarpaulins, and the consignor of that wool loads the trucks and puts the tarpaulins on.

55. But does the Department go so far as to say that, if they give you bad tarpaulins at these stations, they are not responsible?—Oh, no, I would not say that.

56. Would you attribute the wetting at these stations to bad tarpaulins?—Not so much as to putting the tarpaulins on carelessly.

57. Have you noticed whether the tarpaulins have been bad—faulty?—Yes.

58. Would it be worth while pointing out that the Department should be careful where flag stations are concerned?—I have not seen it so much in regard to flag stations; but at Timaru and here I have had in my mind the thought of complaining about the faulty tarpaulins, but I think they do their best in that respect, because sometimes the tarpaulins are torn and they are not aware of it.

59. Do you know of any cases where flax is stowed with wool on your boats?—As a rule we stow flax in every ship.

60. How do you stow it?—We keep it in one end, and when the wool gets up to it—if we have wool in one end and flax at the other—when we come up to the wool or flax we put two loose battens between the two and drive it home that way. We have sometimes complaints about the wool soaking up tallow out of tallow-casks, so that it makes us very careful in stowing wool on tallow. If you put wool on top of a tallow-cask, somehow or other the tallow inside the cask is drawn into the wool, so that we invariably cover these casks with battens of wood and mats.

61. In regard to wool arriving at your stores, have you any control of that?—In what way?

62. Control of the receiving, delivering, and dumping in the stores?—We receive it.

63. Have you control of that?—Yes.

64. You would issue general instructions?—Yes.

65. In the event of wool coming to your stores, have your men strict instructions to look out for moisture in wool?—Not for moisture in wool. They would report if one bale was warm, and they would report if one had a little dampness on it.

66. That is moisture?—Yes, moisture, and they report if a bale was very damp.

67. Have they any definite instructions as to what should be done with wool that is damp to a certain degree or faulty in any way?—Oh, yes, we always have it reconditioned.

68. And that is without reference to the owners?—No, after that.

69. You have no control—it is not within your power to say what shall be done?—No. As a rule there is no difficulty: when we see that a bale is not fit for shipment it is taken away and reconditioned.