

THOMAS WERRY sworn and examined. (No. 70.)

337. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am storeman for the New Zealand Farmers' Co-operative Association, at their grain-stores, on the South Belt.

338. You have had some experience with wool?—Yes, nine years now.

339. Is the wool under your supervision there?—Yes, for the past four years, it has been; previous to that I was second in charge.

340. Can you give the Commission some information as to the condition of wool passing through your stores, such as Mr. Stewart has just been giving us?—I can bear out pretty well all Mr. Stewart has told you, as far as my knowledge is concerned. I have seen nothing extraordinary in greasy wool, except through getting wet in transit. We have often received it wet through transit, and more especially coming from round the coast.

341. Have the bales been wet?—Yes, soaking—gone right inside the bales, through their having gone into the sea and been fished out again. We would open that up at once, and spread it out.

342. And if it were very bad you would not bother about drying it?—We have a very good place on the roof where we can spread it out to dry.

343. You would not rebale it until it was perfectly dry?—Of course, if a bale was slightly damp on the outside we would not take it out; we would slit the side of the bale and give it a chance to recondition.

344. If that had arrived by rail, would the wet be caused through a faulty tarpaulin?—Yes, it often occurs in that way.

345. You understand the system of loading the trucks?—Yes, and two tarpaulins overlap on the top, which is flat. In heavy rain the wind drives underneath the overlap. We have often had it in that condition.

346. Could that be prevented by a better system of stacking?—Yes.

347. Say, if the centre row of bales was higher than the others?—Yes, the trouble last season was that we had to put twenty-four bales in L wagons and twenty-seven bales in LA wagons. You have to put one row along the bottom and two full rows on top of that; that leaves a perfectly flat top.

348. So, if you had only two rows and one single row on top that would leave you the roof you require?—Yes, that would be a great improvement, and the wet could not so easily get in, and there would be less wet wool.

349. That would reduce the number per truck to about twenty and twenty-two?—Yes. It would depend upon how the bales are packed.

350. And that would give you the shed you want for the top?—Yes.

351. *Captain Blackburne.*] Have you ever found bales heated through being wet in the way you speak of?—Yes, I have in one or two cases. We had some from Cheviot which was hot—in fact, so hot that you could not bear your hand in it.

352. And that was a case of where the moisture was mainly on the outside and had not penetrated far into the bale?—It was pretty well saturated.

353. *The Chairman.*] Was it packed damp?—No, wet with salt-water.

354. That would have come from Port Robinson, not by rail?—That is so. It came to us on the trucks, but it was wet with sea-water.

355. *Mr. Foster.*] You heard the evidence which Mr. Stewart has given. You say you can corroborate all he has said?—He said he noticed a lot of low-grade wools heated.

356. He said "some"?—That has not been my experience, not unless through rain-water or salt-water. That is the only time I have noticed a heated bale.

357. What do you mean by "rain"—do you mean prior to packing?—No, wool perfectly dry when packed but wet in transit. I have not noticed any difference in the low-grade wools this season. It seems that the local men have put through the same quantity of pieces and locks.

358. Do you handle any flax in your stores?—No. We dump about a thousand bales of wool for shipment on owners' account without going through the local sales, and in some cases we have had that wool there for some two months, and I have never noticed any sign of heat.

359. *The Chairman.*] These have always appeared satisfactory from the outside?—Yes, and we have never had any complaints from London about heated wool. I should have heard it if there had been any complaints.

360. *Captain Blackburne.*] March and April were fairly wet months. Several of the ships that caught fire nearing London, or after arrival in London, loaded in the latter part of April, and I should like to know whether the probability is that the weather was wetter than usual?—I should not like to say whether it was or not. If the wool was shipped in April it would have been a considerable time in store at Lyttelton, and if not dumped it would have shown any moisture. Our last sales are in February here.

361. Then, it would remain in store for some time?—Yes. If not loaded until March or April it would have had plenty of time to heat, and would have been discovered.

362. *The Chairman.*] But a lot of that wool might not have passed through the sales. It might have been shipped right away?—Yes, or through the local scouring-works, and we should know nothing about it. I suppose the scouring-works are always sending wool away—by almost every ship. We handle very little scoured or slipe wools—practically none.

363. Do these people ship on their own?—Yes, it goes direct from the scouring-works to the vessel.

364. Who dumps it?—The Shaw-Savill Company and the New Zealand Shipping Company.

365. *Mr. Foster.*] Those are the only two companies dumping?—Yes, shipping companies. We have a big plant at our store. I remember one line of scoured wool which we shipped for a client. That is the only line I remember.