

24. Supposing that within the last two days I had visited a flax-mill that arranged its effluent water used under pressure to clean out all the flax-gum scraped off by the strippers, and that means were used at the mill which absolutely prevented any of the smallest gum particles from reaching the creek alongside of which the flax-mill was working, would you believe that possible?—I have not see it, nor have I heard of it.

25. The method was to take this effluent water away in a continuous trough about a foot square and discharge it amongst the vegetation—growing flax, grass, niggerheads, and so forth. All the rubbish, even the finest, was caught in the grass, and the final effluent contained nothing except a little dye. Is any such method used in your flax-mill?—Such a method has just been started, I understand, in—I think it is—Mr. Brown's mill at Waikanae. With a 3 in. pump 180 gallons of water per minute go into a mill. That water has to go out again. If you are going to run that over a flat surface of niggerheads and raupo and stuff, I think it is exceedingly likely that it will eventually be a bed of disease.

26. My question was simply whether the flax-refuse could be arrested?—Under such a method I think it could.

27. Failing growing flax or niggerheads or similar material to act as a trap, would it not be possible to arrange wire netting so as to produce dead water—water distributed over a sufficient area—and compel the settlement of all solids? Would not such a plan as that be equally effective?—I do not think it would be practicable, in the first place. I do not think it possible.

28. Would you credit the statement if you were told that it was being done?—It would all depend on how long such a thing had been done. If it had been done for a week I should say, Yes, it was probably quite correct. If for a year, I could not believe it.

29. Why?—Because, in the first place, such a large volume of water comes down that a man would want an area that was practically unlimited in which to collect this stuff through the wire. Or if you had settling-tanks, with such a large volume of moist matter going through, you would want a tank for every day of the week. You would want acres and acres of land as settling-tanks. You would want more than one a day—one of huge dimensions. You have 180 gallons of water per minute going through a pump.

30. The water is passing away all the time, but leaving its deposit behind. The water goes freely?—But this stuff floats.

31. In a current, yes?—It will float for a week before it will settle.

32. Not in water that is still or comparatively still?—It will float for a considerable time.

WILLIAM WOOD, Merchant, Christchurch, examined. (No. 3.)

*Witness:* I desire to say that owing to the higher price that is ruling now, the flax-milling industry is extending in Southland just now. There will be some thirty or forty mills working there. The industry is also extending in the outlying districts, such as Gisborne and Auckland. The Manawatu has been the home of the industry, and there is a very much better style of flax-milling there than in any other part of New Zealand, but owing to the increased price the different waste areas are now being taken up. The flax-milling industry, of course, has been developing, and manufacture has improved, and there is not the waste or the trouble from rubbish going into the rivers that there was. As merchants and manufacturers we have got to look for the cultivation of the flax in the future, and all these waste areas. As I say, I should think there will be from thirty to forty more mills in Southland this year than last, and I should think from twenty to thirty more in Auckland. If there is any curtailing of the industry it means an immense loss to the country. Flax-millers are really bringing into use a waste product—a product that can be used for nothing else.

1. *Mr. Buick.*] Do you consider that there are other areas than the Manawatu that are in a like condition—flat areas of low-lying country that would have just the same trouble as the Manawatu?—Certainly I do; but the mills are very much closer on the Manawatu, and the river has probably a slower current than most of the other rivers. The law, however, would affect one part as well as another.

2. *Mr. Buxton.*] You mentioned that the industry is developing in the South Island: what do you think would be the effect on the industry if this Bill did not pass?—There is an injunction which would practically stop the millers from doing their work at all.

3. You consider that if this Bill is not put through it will mean a very considerable set-back to the industry in the South Island?—Yes, a very great loss indeed.

4. *The Chairman.*] You say that there are thirty or forty more mills in Southland to-day than there were last year: were mills in operation on the same flax-fields in Southland before?—Yes; they were shut down owing to the low prices.

5. In other words, the future is likely to be like the past—the number of mills increases as the price increases?—They will operate with high prices, and shut down with low prices.

6. *Mr. Buick.*] Do you consider that an increased cost of production would do something to damage the industry?—If it cost more to produce, and we had the prices of last year, there would be hardly any mills running at all—unless they were absolutely under some contract that they must run—because they made hardly anything last year.

7. You consider that cheap production is the only thing that keeps the industry going—that there is no room for what happened in the Old Country, where the large factories went to great expense to stop the effluent from getting into the waters? You consider there is no room for that in the flax industry at present?—I certainly think there is no room. It depends on the price, of course: that is the main thing.