

26. Is it likely, then, that the injunction is purposely held in suspense, because the threat of an injunction has been effective?—That is possible, although, mind you, these improvements were put in before the injunction was ever applied for. The Marine Department took the matter up because pieces of fibre were going in. They made the flax-millers put in tow-wheels to stop the refuse going into the river.

27. Are you in a position to say that such an enormous quantity of fibre was put into the river that it interfered in same way with the steamers down at the mouth of the Manawatu?—Yes. Probably there were forty or fifty mills, and the small particles of fibre from each mill would amount to a good deal in the aggregate; and the steamers coming up to Foxton would naturally have some difficulty by this stuff interfering with the screw. But there is nothing of that now, because every mill has a tow-wheel to arrest any fibre or solids.

28. If the improvement in arresting rubbish in the flax-mills has been so great as you state to the Committee, is there any real fear of trouble in the future, provided the flax-mills carry on their business as you say they are doing?—You see we are absolutely at the mercy of any person who may find fault with us. It is not a question of whether we are doing them any actual harm. It is a technical breach, and it means that if there is any friction you are likely to have an injunction taken out. We feel that there is no harm being done, and, that being so, why should we have a sword hanging over our head?

29. Would you say that the sword was not necessary, in view of the fact that the Minister of Marine had to enter his protest?—We are quite willing that the Bill should provide that all the fibre and that sort of thing should be kept out; but we say that the fine particles of vegetation it is practically impossible to keep out, or, if it is possible, the water will be in a worse state than it is at present. We say that the Bill is very drastic as far as we are concerned. The safeguards in the Bill for any one likely to be affected are enormous, but we are willing to go to any reasonable length in order that we may have definite lines to work on. We say it is not justice that we should be at the mercy of a person to whom we might be doing no harm. We know there will be trouble if the Bill is not brought in.

30. What about trouble to the other fellow if this Bill is passed?—We say that nobody can be injuriously affected by this Bill. We cannot see how any one can possibly be affected by the system we have in operation now and by the clauses of the Bill. I do not think one person could prove that he would be affected under those clauses.

31. *Mr. Pearce.*] Do you know Mr. Green's mill?—I have not been there since he built.

32. You know that he has a mill?—Yes.

33. If I made the statement that the water from his mill, which runs through my property in a very large drain that has been flooded two or three times, has killed all the watercress and vegetation and fish—in fact, the grass—for two or three feet above the water on each side, would you contradict me?—I could not credit it if he is running his water direct into the drain. If he is running it into a dam first, and it is lying there putrid it might possibly be so.

34. I believe he is running it straight into the drain?—Then I can hardly credit your statement.

35. Supposing the Manawatu kept the water back there for a fortnight, would you think it possible?—Then the stagnant water and the chemicals from the swamp would kill it. I have seen grass killed through water lying on it without there being a flax-mill near.

36. Burke's drain and Poole's drain run parallel with one another; they come out of the same swamps, yet one is full of watercress and wild fowl and fish, while the other has none, although they were both full prior to the mill starting operations. Do you still doubt what I said?—Yes. We know there was never a great deal of vegetation in Burke's drain, because the water there was absolutely black before ever a mill was put on it.

37. *Mr. Buick.*] You say you have made great improvements in regard to retaining the fibre. Have those improvements been made since the action?—A lot of them were made before the action, and there have been further improvements effected since, in this way: there have been gratings added to nearly all the tow-wheels, which makes it doubly certain that all the fibre will be arrested.

38. *The Chairman.*] Are you not a little contradictory? You say that the arrest of the fibre would be an improvement, yet you told us that the arrest of the fibre would mean its decomposition?—You misunderstand me. The fibre that is taken out is taken out by a wheel, and the water and small particles run through. What I claim is that if the vegetation is run into a dam and is allowed to rot—whether there is fibre with it or not—naturally the water oozing through comes out in a very much worse state than if it goes direct into the river. The fibre that we take out is taken out fresh: it has not had time to decompose.

EDWARD PHILLIP LEVIEN examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am engaged in flax-milling on the Oroua River.

2. *Mr. Broad.*] Have you read the Pollution of Water Bill?—Yes.

3. What is your opinion about it?—It is absolutely necessary to protect the industry.

4. Why?—Because we could not possibly mill without the water, or without allowing a certain amount of the vegetation to get back into the river.

5. What method are you using now to keep the vegetation and solids out?—I have a couple of grates fixed into the drain. The first one collects the larger stuff, and the second one gets the smaller pieces. So there is only a small proportion of the vegetation going into the river.

6. Have you found this method satisfactory?—Yes, quite satisfactory.

7. Does any of your fibre go into the river at all now?—No, none whatever.

8. Then, what does go into the river from the mill?—A proportion of the vegetation, and, of course, the discoloured water.