

48. Would you feel justified in saying to the Committee that if reasonable precautions had been taken to keep this large quantity of stuff out of the river, no injunction would ever have been applied for?—Absolutely. It was with great reluctance that steps were taken, because the thing was not done lightly. Messrs. Bell, Gully, and Cooper were the solicitors who instituted the proceedings. I was only in as counsel with Mr. Cooper, and the matter was very carefully considered, and it was found that the position was intolerable.

49. As to erosion, do you know the river away up above the flax-mills?—I have only been about a mile and a half above the flax-mills, to the end of a place where a man called Saunders has built a very large retaining-wall; and I know the river at Johnston's place, which is higher still, and I know it at Awahuri Bridge.

50. Are you not aware from your own observation generally in New Zealand that rivers of the class of the Oroua are continually wandering from side to side, and carrying away large areas of valuable soil?—You would see on the lower reaches of the Oroua, if you were there, that that has not been the case there. The Oroua, in its lower reaches, is confined within high definite banks. Higher up, where the shingle has begun to invade, no doubt that does happen; but down below there is no shingle at all; it is a purely silt bottom, and there are high definite banks.

51. What you claim is that erosion has been largely caused by the debris from the flax?—Yes. The evidence given in the police prosecution, which I will leave here, will give you some idea as to the large embankments that have been caused.

*The Chairman:* Do you wish to ask any questions, Mr. Nathan?

*Mr. Nathan:* I desire to say that those interested in the dairying industry are quite in accord with those who are fighting for the flax-millers, and are prepared to accept an amendment as suggested by Mr. Baldwin. We are prepared to filter, &c., and if an amendment such as that is inserted in the new Bill, it will suit us as well as the Bill proposed.

52. *Mr. Buick* (to witness).] You have said that the present law is in accord with the law all over the British dominions?—Yes.

53. Is it not a fact that the law has been altered to suit the goldfields?—Oh, no doubt, in New Zealand.

54. It has also been altered to suit the dredging operations in the South Island?—Yes.

55. Also, I believe, with respect to the Murray River in Australia?—For particular purposes, Yes.

56. So it would not necessarily be a breaking of the law to make an alteration to suit these particular industries—it can be done?—Certainly, it can be done.

Dr. MACLAURIN, Dominion Analyst, examined. (No. 20.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you seen the Pollution of Water Bill?—No.

2. What we wish to get from you is any information you can give us as to the result of water passing through a flax-mill and carrying more or less dye and pulp from the machines into the river; we also desire your opinion as to injury to health in the case of dairy factories where the washings are put into small streams and create putrefaction and bad smells?—I certainly think that something should be done to regulate the pollution of streams generally, but I do not think it would do to fix any one particular standard for purity of the effluent. I think that the purity of the effluent should depend on a number of circumstances, principally on the size of the stream into which it flows. There were demands made in the Old Country from time to time to fix one definite standard for all waters, and that, to my mind, is very unsatisfactory, because if a large amount of effluent of a certain degree of purity is put into a small stream, the pollution is bad; while if the same quantity is put into a large stream the pollution may not be noticeable at all. I suppose at this stage it would be unnecessary to suggest anything in the way of standards; that would come better, no doubt, if regulations were to be drafted, and standards could be fixed in the regulations, or the whole thing might be left to the Health Department and other Departments to consider. The Health Department, to my mind, is the best one to consider this matter. I do not know that it is necessary to have any other Departments connected with it at all. That Department will naturally see that the water is as pure as it can be under the circumstances. I made some analyses of the water in question in this case, but, unfortunately, the samples were taken in May, and being taken then I do not suppose they represented the water in the summer months at all. But these samples taken in May did not show what I would call serious pollution. They showed pollution, but not serious pollution. The worst of them was considerably purer than what is adopted as standard by several bodies in the Old Country. At the same time, probably these waters would have been very much worse in the summer months. The provisions professed to have been adopted by the flax-millers were not of a satisfactory kind. The grating is much too open, and it would be very easy to improve on that without materially increasing the cost of treatment, I take it. I should think that a fairly fine-meshed grating would be sufficient to keep out everything that would do harm to the water. So far as I am aware of what has been done, there is nothing poisonous in flax; so that you may consider flax as you would any other vegetable fibre—grass, or toitoi, or other vegetable fibre that might get into the stream. Probably it would produce about the same amount of organic solids soluble in water. So there is no material difference in that respect.

3. We had it in evidence this morning that flax-water of a given strength has been proved to have a purgative effect, as in the case of rhubarb. The fact was mentioned, too, that the Maoris use it as a medicine, concentrating the essence of the flax. The statement was also made that cows have suffered from drinking a stagnant solution of the effluent from a flax-mill. What would you say to such statements?—I have no proof that such is the case. There is no proof, so far as I am aware. The chemistry of flax is not very complete, but the chemist who has done most of the work on the subject—Professor Church—affirms that the only medicinal principle in the flax is a non-poisonous bitter principle. It has certain tonic properties.