

their powers were defined by statute. It would be a difficult duty to ask them to perform now as long as they are Government servants purely under the control of a Department. If they got into conflict with the member for the district in each case, they would require some further protection.

57. Do you happen to know personally the condition of the Manawatu and Oroua Rivers in recent years as to the flax pollution?—Yes. I was engaged in the case at Palmerston North in which certain riparian owners tried to prevent pollution, and they ultimately succeeded in getting an injunction. But the case was an extremely unsatisfactory one in that evidence was required dealing mainly with the period at which the river was extremely low, and evidence of that character was a good deal by means of photographs taken when the river was in half-flood, and apparently there were miles of water. The photographs showed an enormous quantity of water in the river which any sensible man could see could not be affected by the effluents that were then escaping; and there was a great dearth of evidence as to what happened when the stream was low. The chemical tests did unquestionably show pollution even in a tolerably high state of the water, so you can imagine that in a low state of the water the pollution would be quite intolerable. As a matter of fact direct evidence of that kind was not presented to the Court. I myself had no opportunity to deal with it, because I was not asked to view the river until a few days before the trial, when the river was in fresh; but I did ascertain that the bed of the river was laden with tow deposited, with light sand on top of it, and that it was putrid. I took some up a good distance below the mill—about a mile below the lowest.

58. Submerged tow?—Submerged tow and pulp had been entrapped by the water and buried in the silt, and it was rotting on the bed of the river.

59. Would you consider it possible that evidence could be given of parts of the Manawatu River channel having silted up with sand and fibre from a depth of 7 ft. or 8 ft. almost to the surface?—I have not the slightest doubt that it could be proved that at certain places where the tow had been allowed to accumulate and it was held down by silt the bed of the stream had been raised. I am not prepared to say how high—about 3 ft. or 4 ft., I should say, in the Oroua, for instance, would certainly be a possibility.

60. Will you state what your opinion is as to the duty incumbent on the Government of the country to prevent interference with an important water-channel like the Manawatu to such an extent as you indicate by this silting up, quite apart from health or other damage? Ought not the Government to have taken steps long ago, from points of view other than health, to stop this silting up?—That is a very wide question. In the absence of a local authority to deal with the conservation of these particular rivers, I know the Government are proverbially slow to interfere. I do not quite know why they should interfere. If the farmers immediately interested, who are subject to flooding, choose to submit to it, I do not know why the Government need relieve them. There is no menace to health in that. In some parts of the world these risen river-beds have reached extraordinary dimensions. In the south and east of Japan the railways go underneath the river-beds because the latter have already got to such a height that it is almost impracticable to bridge them, in view of the gradients involved. Occasionally these rivers break their banks, and wholesale destruction ensues. That is the tendency with what you have mentioned.

61. *Mr. Pearce.*] Can you tell us as a flax-miller whether it would be detrimental to the colour of the flax to pass it from the patent catcher a distance of 6 ft. or 8 ft. before the water is applied to it?—If the flax had not time to become dry or appreciably drier in the interval before the stream of water fell upon it, it would still preserve the moisture, and it might travel.

62. In this case it is travelling fast on a chain. All the pulp is falling on a dry floor. It then goes into the patent washer, and 5 tons per day are collected off that floor, at the expense of the wages of one man, who also collects the stripper-droppings. Would the expenditure of that sum of money injure the industry?—Probably not; but I have never been able to see any reason why labour should be needed at all for it. If the mill were suitably equipped it would run away without any interference at all.

63. *The Chairman.*] The Committee would be very glad, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you could indicate where we could put our hands on the information that you referred to?—I will see if I can get you the information.

ALEXANDER FRANCIS HADFIELD, Farmer, examined. (No. 28.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your address, Mr. Hadfield?—Waikanae

2. *Mr. Field.*] Your mother is the owner of a property at Waikanae, which is watered by a small stream on which there is a flax-mill?—She is the life tenant, and she has asked me to represent her in this matter.

3. The property is in the vicinity of the flax-mill?—Yes, within two or three hundred yards.

4. The flax-mill is on the stream which flows through the property?—Yes.

5. What sort of a stream is it?—It is a fresh mountain stream. It comes across from the mountains there, and runs past the mill into a drain which has been constructed to receive it and take it on to Mr. Campion's place.

6. How large is the stream?—It would be on an average from about 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. in width; and it would vary from bank-high in winter-time to about 6 in. or 7 in. in the summer.

7. A mere dribble in the summer?—That is so.

8. Has it got any appreciable fall to the sea?—Yes, but it is a good way to the sea.

9. How far is it from the flax-mill to the sea?—The stream runs in a direct line westward, and then it goes through Mr. Campion's and Mr. Field's properties. I suppose, by the stream, from the flax-mill it would be very nearly four miles to the sea.

10. How does it affect your mother's property—the putting of the flax-refuse into this stream?—Well, it affects it very seriously, because it entirely pollutes that stream. The stream