

of the tests. We could not honestly set out to give a big order for paint unless we know what we are buying, not even if we know the materials used in the manufacture. There is only one test for paint, and that is its lasting-quality and the efficiency of the material of which it is based. A chemical analysis of the paint is no good. Roof-paint is made mostly from oxides. We can test it reasonably in about six months. We use a lot of New Zealand hæmatite and imported oxides.

2. *To Mr. Hudson.*] It is not fair to say that the Government Departments will not support local industries. It is my business as a Government official to see that local industries get a fair chance of showing what they can do. At the same time we have to see that the materials are sufficiently good to warrant being purchased. We cannot lose sight of the fact that we are spending public revenues, and as trustees of public revenue we have to get the best results for the expenditure. We have given local production preferential treatment to this extent: if they can produce an article locally and the price is not unreasonable as compared with the imported article we buy the local product every time. We are willing to test Jackson and Co.'s products, keep a record of them, and build our future orders on the results. That has not been done as far as I know. Personally, I was not handling the matter until eighteen months ago, but I believe my predecessor went to Jackson and Co. and asked them to do something of that kind. My remarks apply to everything of local production, and not only to paint. For years we have not imported a broom or brushware. Our supplies are manufactured in New Zealand. We also take locally manufactured galvanized buckets, stretchers, mattresses, leather goods, hose-pipes for water-tanks, leather belting, and other lines.

3. *To Mr. Sidey.*] It has not been proved to us that the quality of Jackson and Co.'s paint is up to the standard.

4. *To Mr. Craigie.*] A few years ago we used more hæmatite than we use now. We used more when we got the Nelson article. The Nelson was better than the Thames. An English oxide is supplied to us under contract by local manufacturers. We use a lot of oxide for roofs, and a lot of red-lead for bridges and girders. Our technical experts tell us about the quality of paints. The essential thing is good oil. If we got good oil we could use the Nelson hæmatite. Oxide is brighter than hæmatite. We would not give a guarantee to use any exclusive paint and leave others out of consideration. Hæmatite has not the holding-qualities of oxide, not even for roofs. Wagons have to go through tunnels which are full of sulphur, and the paint must be of good quality to resist the chemical effects.

5. *To Mr. Veitch.*] Paint-manufacturing is comparatively new in New Zealand, and it is so new that we cannot give a definite opinion about it. The English oxides are supplied by local merchants. It is easy to select an item and say that we should import it, but I point out that we have a thousand lines, and if we start to import them we must put up a big building to hold great stocks. This would tie up a tremendous lot of capital, and, considering what the interest would be on that capital, it would not pay us to import when we can get the goods from the stores of local merchants.

6. *To Dr. A. K. Newman.*] We have used locally made putty, particularly a Dunedin make, but we found that the colour and the quality were not sufficiently good. When we used it on windows it broke off.

7. *To the Chairman.*] We are not going to buy locally manufactured paints without testing them, but the test would not run over five years. When I spoke of five years I said that we did our repainting of buildings every five years or seven years. We might arrange with a paint-manufacturer to use his paint on a building as a test, the painter to refund if the paint did not prove satisfactory, but it is a question that has not been before us. A twelve-months' test would give us an idea of what a paint was likely to be. I admit that it would not be possible to get an absolute guarantee of the purity of a paint. There is a guarantee on the tins and in the catalogues.

8. *To Mr. Craigie.*] We are large users of paints. It would be better to import oils and paints for ourselves, but that opens up a question that it might take me a couple of hours to explain. We import direct from the manufacturer all our white-lead and all the oil we use. Wherever it pays the Department to do it, the Department goes direct to the manufacturer.

9. *To Mr. Veitch.*] There is no reason why disinfectants with high efficiency should not be made in New Zealand. We have not done any business with the Restar Company in disinfectants, but there is a sample in my office. It is not reasonable for a company to come along with a disinfectant to-day and expect us to try it next week. We already have stocks. In some cases we have a two-years' stock. The Restar product is under analysis at present to ascertain how it compares with the imported article. The price is about the same, and if the quality is all right the Department will be prepared to give the company consideration next time. There were other disinfectants made in New Zealand, and we would have to consider the claims of all of them. At the time of the influenza epidemic manufacturers of disinfectants came to us and said, "We are producing disinfectants that will suit your purpose." We could not take any risks, however. We had our own stocks. We have to see to it that disinfectants are odourless and colourless, otherwise the travelling public would complain. I can assure the Committee that in the matter of production the Department will give reasonable preference to the local article in purchasing goods in the future. That is the settled policy of the Department.

10. *To the Chairman.*] We have used Steelite red for roofs. It is a good paint. The Department has an indenting branch for the importation of its goods direct. At the same time, it calls for goods through local merchants. That fact, however, opens up a position which I cannot explain in a few words. Our method of procuring supplies has been adopted by every Harbour Board and City Council in New Zealand. It has been adopted, too, by a good many of the Australian railways. At the same time the Department is willing to learn or to improve its methods.