

in any other country. It is like any other tobacco: it has merits and it has demerits; but one of the greatest virtues is the small content of nicotine, provided leaf is grown on soils which do not contain an excess of chlorides.

"I have been asked to give an opinion on the sample\* of leaf submitted to me by Mr. Cecil C. Nash, Hope, Nelson, and now report upon same as follows: 'The type presented by this sample is essentially a cigarette tobacco of high-grade order. It is a well-shaped leaf, broad and of fair size and fine silky texture, mild body, and excellent flavour and aroma; combustibility perfect. The outstanding feature of the sample, however, is its uniform bright-lemon-yellow colour, which should particularly appeal to manufacturers of cigarettes. In my opinion, this leaf compares favourably with some of the best types grown in the United States of America and in South Africa.'"

Great importance must be attached to the evidence of Mr. S. F. Brame, who has had wide experience in the cultivation and buying of leaf in the United States, Canada, China, Japan, Russia, and New Zealand, regarding the quality of New Zealand leaf:—

"The natural surroundings of the Nelson district, its climate, and the intelligence of the average farmer, in my opinion, classes it as very favourable for growing tobacco-leaf of suitable quality, and from my experience more suitable than any other country I have worked in—outside, of course, the United States. The bulk of the leaf produced in the Nelson district, from my experience, is second to that grown in Virginia, or what we know as Virginian tobacco, and is quite suitable to produce a smoking-mixture which should meet with the public favour in New Zealand. . . . Every manufacturer who is catering for public requirements must give considerable consideration, firstly, to a blend of the raw product. The difference in the soils of the various parts of the Nelson district will allow for this blend, and if proper attention and encouragement are given to the farmer I am sure that New Zealand could supply at least 75 per cent. of the raw leaf to meet the public demand.

"*The Chairman.*] I take it from your answers that from your experience you are of opinion that New Zealand can produce a suitable tobacco?—I do not see any reason why it cannot.

"You have said in your statement, 'I am sure New Zealand could supply at least 75 per cent. of the raw leaf to meet the public demand'?—You could put 75 per cent. of the New Zealand tobacco in a cigarette with the imported tobacco and I am sure the average man could not tell the difference.

"What do you base that statement on—how could a man not tell the difference?—Because he could not tell the difference in the smoking-qualities of it from the imported tobacco.

"So that, according to your evidence, we can grow a suitable leaf in New Zealand. What districts or areas would you, as an expert, recommend for the growing of the leaf?—I do not know much about New Zealand. What experience I have had has been round the Nelson district. I should say, though, the Motueka River valley—Motueka, Dovedale, Moutere, and on the Riwaka River would be suitable areas.

"You are quite satisfied that in the areas you have named tobacco-leaf second only to the Virginian tobacco of which you have spoken can be produced?—It has already been proved: they have produced it.

"Have you seen any Australian-grown leaf?—Yes.

"How would that compare with the New Zealand leaf?—I do not think you could compare it at all; it is of inferior quality.

"In what way?—The Australian leaf has a very distinct aroma. It grows a big, heavy leaf with a big midrib. If you took out the midrib it would be 40 per cent.; and if you took it out here it might come down to 32 per cent."

Mr. Brame has also stated that he had inspected in factory Australian leaf.

We, as a Committee weighing up the expert and other evidence tendered before us, are definitely of the opinion—(1) That New Zealand leaf has been grown of a standard equal to any grade other than the best Virginian; (2) that such results have been obtained without the usual experiments extended over a period as have been carried out in all other countries.

As will be seen from the minutes of evidence attached hereto, Messrs. W. D. and H. O. Wills (N.Z.), Ltd., do not share the general opinion of other witnesses regarding the high quality of New Zealand leaf. Speaking on behalf of the company, Mr. R. B. Smith said:—

"I have obtained the following expression of opinion on the characteristics of New-Zealand-grown tobacco from a member of our staff, who is, in my opinion, the best qualified to judge: 'To some extent it resembles the tobacco around Durham, N.C., but has not the texture or aroma of the American. These differences mean that in a general way the domestic tobacco is only of medium usefulness as a smoke, not having a full measure of pipe qualities of the Old Belt or the cigarette-smoking qualities of the American New Belt tobacco. It is also noticeable that the domestic tobaccos do not as readily soften with moisture or absorb casing as similar tobaccos of American growth.'

"I would express a similar view, and would be inclined to say that New Zealand tobacco, at its best, is neutral, and suitable for blending with American tobaccos for the purpose of pipe smoking. Even at its best it lacks the pleasant aroma and refreshing smoothness of the best American leaf. The amount produced of the best is only a small proportion of the whole. The inferior grades are very lacking in flavour, and pungent."

Your Committee would direct attention to the evidence of Messrs. C. C. Nash (Nelson representative of the National Tobacco Co., Ltd.), C. E. Lowe (Government Tobacco Instructor), W. H. Owen (plantation-manager, New Zealand Tobacco Co., Ltd.), and the extracts from the minutes of evidence of the Recess Industries Committee containing the opinions of Mr. J. Gilmour, quoted before your Committee by Mr. S. G. Smith, president of Motueka District Progress League, regarding the quality of New Zealand leaf and its suitability for manufacturing purposes.

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\* Handed in to Committee.