237. *Captain Blackburne.*] Do you remember any other cases of ships putting in on fire in New Zealand?—No, I do not think I do. I remember the "Gothic" coming here with wool from Lyttelton in 1893, her first or second voyage, with fellmongered wool stowed in No. 2 hold.

238. Did she catch fire?—No; she did not catch fire. She came here to complete her loading, and as the stevedores went down below to make preparations for receiving the Wellington cargo they found the wool hot to their feet. I was on the wharf at the time, and they reported it to me, and I went down and found all the top tiers quite hot, some of them under the saloon. I then recommended that they should be broken out at once. Captain Babot was marine superintendent for that company, and I went to him and Captain Jennings, and they ordered them to be broken out at once and discharged on the wharf. Some of them were found to be very hot, and when opened up they were quite charred and black in the centre, and I have no doubt if that had not been discovered, and she had loaded here with other wool on top in a mass like that, that it would have taken fire spontaneously on the voyage.

239. Do you know what time of the year that was?—No, I do not.

240. As to the conditions of loading, I mean?—I think it must have been the winter-time. Captain Jennings was master then. The wool was discharged and cooled here, and then it was reshipped back to Lyttelton to be dealt with there; but a great deal of the fibre of the wool must have been destroyed.

241. It had come up from Lyttelton?—Yes, from Lyttelton and other ports, but I think this wool was shipped at Lyttelton. I do not suppose that could have been detected when going on board unless they tested it. That is the difficulty with that fellmongered wool—it looks very nice and clean outside, but when stowed away it heats.

242. *Mr. Foster.*] Have you seen any cases of country wool direct from the sheep heated?—No, I do not know that I have. I have known country wool to come in in a bad state from being brought through rivers where the water has got into the drays and wet it in that way.

243. But you have had nothing to lead you to suppose that sheep had been shorn so wet as to be dangerous?—I have no knowledge; but there is no doubt if they were shorn wet there would be that danger.

244. But if there were any of these clips that came forward they must have come under your notice?—At the time I was supervising I should very likely have noticed it.

245. Have you ever noticed whether low-conditioned wool—locks, and pieces, and crutchings—whether they heat more than fellmongered wool?—I have never noticed it particularly, but I should take it for granted that they would. That kind of wool I have always marked for reconditioning where the shippers have not ordered it to be reconditioned themselves.

246. That is, judging from the condition and the temperature?—Not the temperature, the appearance with the unclean dags and that sort of thing.

247. What is the outward indication of that?—Well, they are generally stained packages, and then you can tell the difference between dirt and grease and grease alone. Then I used to make an incision in the pack and examine the inside.

248. But if they were not in a heated condition, would you still order them to be reconditioned?—If they were very bad I should not consider they were fit to be shipped.

249. Would you consider dags thoroughly dried would be unfit to ship?—I could not say they would be; thoroughly dried I do not think they would be.

250. Do you know of any cases where tallow may have been stowed in a ship on top of wool?—No, I have never known of a case.

251. I understand that if there was a vacant space and the ship was nearly full they would practically dump anything in it?—I do not think they would go that far.

252. Supposing that there was a portion, say, in the hatchways that was not full, and a few casks of tallow came down, would they put them in?—No, I should think not. There would be a chance of the tallow liquefying and leaking out on the wool, and the owners would know that if there was damage they would be responsible for that damage.

253. *The Chairman.*] You say that since the grading of flax began during your career as supervisor you have had very much less trouble?—Yes, it relieved me of a very great deal of anxiety. I had a very great deal of trouble with the flax, and when the grading took place I was very pleased. As a matter of fact, it was more than I could do to look after them at the one time, and I also then used to go to the station where the wool came in in wet weather, and I had a great deal to do in that way, finding out the condition as it came in. The wool loaded at the side stations where the railway people did not take any responsibility of stowing the wool—they used to leave a hollow in the centre of the covering sheets, and water would lodge there and gradually run through in amongst the wool. I have seen water running right through bales.

254. At wayside or flag stations?—Yes.

255. Right through?—Entirely through the wool-bale.

256. That wool would not be allowed to be shipped?—I would mark it off for reconditioning. You do not require to scour wool that is wetted with fresh water or rain, but with sea-water you must generally scour and get rid of it, but the rain-water will dry in the sun.

257. Well, if wool was subject to some such supervision as before, do you think there would be less danger?—I should think so.

258. *Captain Blackburne.*] There is still no supervision with regard to the tow, I understand?—No Government inspection of the tow that I am aware of, or of wool.

259. *Mr. Foster.*] Do you think there is danger in the tow lying in the shed—is there as much danger with one as with the other?—Equally so, I think. There is perhaps more danger of tow taking fire from sparks or anything of that sort, because it is looser—it is not packed so securely.

260. *The Chairman.*] From external causes?—Yes, from external causes.

261. Do you think it would be possible that although a bale would not take fire inside, yet there might be sufficient heat to ignite the pack?—There is the danger of that if the pack is