

about \$4 per acre the price has rapidly advanced and at the present time it costs about \$15 per acre for hand pulling, which is a very great detriment to the development of the flax industry in this country, because if as high as \$15 per acre has to be paid for pulling the flax it is not possible to compete with the countries where it costs only \$4 per acre for pulling.

As the flax is pulled it has got to be cured. It has to be de-seeded and in the absence of a mechanical contrivance it practically means that all this work has got to be done by hand. When the de-seeder has removed the seed the flax is laid out on the ground again and exposed to the dews and the rains until, in a very short space of time, the outer woody substance which must be separated from the fibre itself before it can be used, has retted. Now after the retting is done the flax has to be dried again and then gathered up and taken to the mill. I am pointing out the disadvantages under which we have suffered from the standpoint of hiring labour. The flax is delivered by the farmer to the mill and the miller then takes charge of it, but nearly all the processes within the mill have been, to a more or less extent, of a primitive nature and have not enjoyed that development in mechanical devices which almost every other industry of a similar character has experienced. Therefore it has been a costly commodity to manufacture. The different processes which flax has had to undergo on the way to the spinner have been of the old-fashioned character, and as a result the cost has been so great that it has not been, up till recent years, so attractive a proposition for the farmer who is the producer, or for the miller who produces the fibre. It is an old-fashioned saying, however, that necessity is the mother of invention, and when we discussed this subject two years ago in the House we were in this position: There had been no machine discovered which could suitably pull that flax in the field. The old method of hand labour went on, and until last season old methods were still in vogue: The flax was pulled by hand and retted on the ground. Two years ago we had a man in the city of Ottawa who had been working for some years on a machine, and who devised one that in a way did—not altogether effectively by any means, for it was not mechanically perfect—in an imperfect way perform the work of pulling flax. In the year 1916 I visited the flax fields in western Ontario during the harvest season and the most astonishing thing to me was that there was a machine

invented in 1837, and brought into the country in the year 1857, and sixty years after its introduction into Canada was still working in the fields of western Ontario and in a way doing the work of pulling flax. Notwithstanding that the inventor of that machine knew the principle and the idea called for, human ingenuity and the skill of scientists had failed to evolve a perfect machine whereby flax could be economically pulled to meet the competition of cheap labour.

But, as I have said, necessity is the mother of invention, and I am glad to say that now—I have it on the authority of the flax producers of western Ontario—that a gentleman who formerly lived in Montreal, Mr. J. H. Tombyll, has perfected a machine which effectively, efficiently, and satisfactorily performs the work of pulling flax. If such is the case that machine will be of incalculable value to our flax growers and to our farmers, because it will solve once for all the problem of cheap labour in connection with the pulling of flax. The countries of France, Belgium and Russia will never in all likelihood hereafter have the same opportunities of cheap labour that they have enjoyed in the past, but even should this anticipation prove to be unfounded we have now in Canada a satisfactory method of meeting their competition. The best evidence that the machine in question is satisfactory is that it worked in the fields most successfully last year. One western Ontario grower has bought sixteen of the machines for operation next year, and another has purchased eighteen. I have it from men who are producers and growers in that part of Ontario that the machine is working satisfactorily. Therefore, I figure it is safe to assume that we have practically solved the difficulty of pulling flax economically. I am also told, strange as it may be, that almost concurrently with the development of this device in Canada they have perfected a machine of the same kind in Ireland, and that they have not only perfected a pulling machine but also a scutching machine. The very need which has been pressed home upon growers in Ireland, just as it has been pressed home upon our growers here, has driven them to a solution of the problem which has disturbed them and which they had not been able to solve for a period of hundreds of years back. Had we nothing else to encourage us at the present time in developing the growth of flax than the fact that we have solved the problem of cheap labour for the har-