

Mr. BURRELL: We are not in a position to give any details yet. I may say, however, we are making satisfactory progress.

Mr. GLASS: I understood samples of flax for fibre have been grown on the different Experimental Farms throughout the Dominion and that samples had been sent to the Experimental Farm here, to be tested out?

Mr. KNOWLES: I had never heard about the flax business before, and would like some information. For example, there is the problem of straw on the prairie farm. Recently there has been established at Moosejaw a plant which produces gas from straw revolutionizing the methods of heating. Inasmuch as the work of the Experimental farms is in the interest of the farmers, I have often thought it was unfortunate that the Government had not looked into this matter before. We have also the problem with regard to our flax straw. I presume that is why my hon. friend from East Middlesex (Mr. Glass) speaks of. If the department have been experimenting along these lines we would like to know it.

Mr. BURRELL: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. friend full information about it. We have been doing a good deal of work during the last year. There was quite a discussion amongst the flax growers of the different provinces—it started in Ontario, I believe—partly on account of the seed, but largely on account of the straw. As to the fibre industry, a great many difficulties have had to be faced, because in this country they have never been able to solve the problem of dew retting. This has been done in Europe, and in Russia. It is an open-air process, and the installation of tanks for dew retting is expensive. Comparatively little work has been done. As a result of representations made by the Flax Growers' Association and others interested, we appointed a man about a year ago and attached him to the Experimental Farms with the idea that he should give his whole attention to flax. We started growing different varieties of flax seed on the Experimental Farms. We have also entered into contracts in a small way with some of the farmers to grow flax. We are establishing some machinery and tanks and intend to experiment with it. We hope to see what developments may be made in a profitable way and to make a report this fall. There are climatic conditions here which are not met with in Europe, and which may make

it more difficult for us. At the same time, I am convinced a great deal can be done.

Mr. OLIVER: Is the idea to utilize the fibre of the natural flax—to get both seed and fibre?

Mr. BURRELL: Yes.

Mr. OLIVER: And, under present process, when the seed is mature, the fibre is not in a condition to be used?

Mr. BURRELL: I am not positive about that. I would not like to enter into a technical discussion of it.

Mr. KNOWLES: Has the minister taken any interest in the question of using straw for the production of gas on the prairies?

Mr. BURRELL: We have not gone into it. It was done by the Canadian Pacific Railway, I think.

Mr. KNOWLES: The minister would find it worth his while to stop off and see it, any time he happens to be in Moosejaw. They have lately taken one of the professors from the Saskatchewan University, and he is giving all his time to it. The idea is, they draw the gases from the straw. This gas is used for lighting, heating and so on. If it can be worked out commercially, it would be worth a great deal of money.

Mr. SCHAFFNER: How successful are they?

Mr. KNOWLES: The results are very satisfactory. It has never yet been put on the market, but the owners of the invention have it working very satisfactorily. A load of straw will go very far in heating and lighting a farm house.

Mr. ROCHE: The by-products are sufficient to pay for the cost of manufacture.

Mr. KNOWLES: They are able to run machinery and so on from one little retort. They have not had sufficient money so far to put the thing on a commercial basis. They have often expressed the wish to me that members of the provincial Government, and especially members of the Federal Government, should go and visit the place.

Mr. SCHAFFNER: Have they tested out different kinds of straw?

Mr. KNOWLES: I cannot say as to that. When I was there they were always using wheat straw.

Mr. GLASS: I understand some of the most valuable experiments in the utilization of cereal straws have been conducted