

development of machinery for the pulling of flax. It is even a question yet as to whether this machine has been brought to a state of perfection, but I understand that certain improvements have been made to the machine that has been on the market for three or four years, and it is likely that a successful machine will be in operation this year.

My hon. friend from West Peterborough (Mr. Burnham) asked me a question a short while ago. I desire at this stage to refer to the conditions of flax production in the Empire of Great Britain. I have before me the interim report to the board of trade of the Empire flax growing committee on the general situation and immediate prospects of a supply of flax fibre. It is dated April, 1918. This is the last report presented to the Imperial Parliament, and some very interesting data appears in it. On the general position of the flax raising industry it says:

The problem of flax supply involves the consideration of two questions. The first question, that of the supply of fibre, is closely dependent on the second, namely, the provision of seed, but the considerations affecting the two questions are so different that it has been thought desirable throughout this report to treat them separately.

1. Fibre Supply.

The following table, based on normal pre-war figures supplied by the Board of Trade, gives the world's commercial crops (i.e., excluding domestic consumption), and the mill consumption of the chief flax manufacturing countries:

	*Commercial crop.	*Mill consumption.
Russia	400	80
United Kingdom	12	100
Belgium	24	130
France	20	48
Germany and Austria	36	140
Other countries	14	8
Total	506	506

*In thousands of tons.

It would not be safe to take these figures as anything more than rough approximation to the actual position, but the only further information available is that Russia's total pre-war product was normally about 500,000 tons, and of this about 250,000 tons was usually exported. About 80,000 to 100,000 tons was consumed in the Russian factories, so that in the absence of direct statistics we must infer that about 200,000 tons of the Russian crop was used up by domestic consumption.

It is estimated that of the annual requirements of the United Kingdom before the war, which as indicated above were normally about 100,000 tons, Ireland contributed some 10,000 tons, Belgium, France and Holland together about 10,000, and Russia about 70,000 to 80,000 tons.

It will be seen that even under the conditions prior to the war a very small amount

[Mr. Glass.]

of the supply was in Great Britain and Ireland and that a very small proportion of the world's production of fibre came from France and Belgium. About 80,000 tons came from Russia for spinners in Great Britain. The future is encouraging in this respect that Russia is so demoralized at the present time that there would seem to be no possibility of any return to normal conditions. But even if Russia could return to normal conditions the product of her mills prior to the war was so inferior to that which is being supplied by Canada and these other countries to-day that she would not be a strong competitor against the high quality, standardized fibre produced in this country. The report continues:

The effect of the war upon all these external sources of supply was nothing short of disastrous. The flax growing districts in Belgium and parts of Northern France were the first to be overrun by the enemy, and the collapse of Russia in 1917 practically removed the principal remaining source of supply. The Dutch crop has also been very seriously reduced by war conditions, while the share of that crop obtainable by the United Kingdom was reduced to a minimum. The districts where Russian flax is produced are still not freely accessible to the British industry, while the free export of flax from Belgium, Holland, and Northern France is unlikely to be resumed for some time to come. The question of obtaining supplies from other sources, therefore, became during the war, and still is, of the first importance for the British linen industry.

The committee goes on to say:

In Ireland, however, flax growing persisted on a much larger scale, not only because the climate seems to be peculiarly suited for it, but also because the spinning and weaving of the resultant fibre had there been developed on a large scale in the North;

I submit that statement would seem to justify the argument that I have presented to the House that if we are going to develop this industry we must develop the manufacturing of the fibre into yarns and the manufacturing of the yarns into cloth. Therefore the development and encouragement of the spinning industry must necessarily go hand in hand with the development and increase of fibre production.

The report goes on to say:

In Ireland, however, flax growing persisted on a much larger scale, not only because the climate seems to be peculiarly suited for it, but also because the spinning and weaving of the resultant fibre had there been developed on a large scale in the North; principally, however, because the crop suited the small farmer class who form the majority of the Irish rural population. The highest point in the acreage was during the cotton famine in the sixties, when the abnormal conditions of the cotton industry naturally gave a great