

PART I.
 —
 Parliamentary
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the timber itself, the forests would furnish bark for dyeing and tanning purposes; the lichens covering the trees might in all probability possess dyeing qualities; resinous gums exuded from the *Dammara* and *Panax*, and perhaps many other varieties; vegetable oil had been expressed from the titoki (*Alictryon excelsum*). He believed many other useful products were only awaiting scientific investigation to add to the wealth and resources of the country; but unless some restraint was placed on the destructive elements now so actively employed, he feared the value of our woodland wealth would only be appreciated on the eve of its extinction. There was no doubt that wood was much wasted here, for he had a note from a writer formerly living in Auckland, who stated that he knew of wood used as firewood there, which fetched 1s. a foot for veneer at home. Eight veneers to an inch would give £4 16s. the cube foot. With regard to the condition of the Middle Island, he might mention that he had often seen Banks' Peninsula covered, for weeks together, with thick and lurid smoke; and in Pigeon Bay, a fire of a most destructive character occurring, an action was brought by the proprietor, under a Canterbury Ordinance, to recover damages, and which were recovered to the extent of £3,000; but, although notice might be taken in this manner in the case of private land, he did not think that notice was ever taken of any damage in the case of Crown land. No inquiry was made with reference to the destruction of large forests, and he thought something practical should be done in the matter, as also, perhaps, an inquiry as to the wisdom of the indiscriminate issue of timber-cutting licenses, the men being in the habit of skinning a bush, as they call it, a practice which, by the dry cuttings of underwood being left amongst the green trees, caused, when fire was accidentally set to it, most destructive results. Again, there was no distinction made by classifying bush land, and the finest timber land sold for the same price as the dryest shingle bed that would hardly feed a goat. Besides the destruction of wood by fire, other valuable products were destroyed which might be obtained from the bush, such as vegetable dyes and resinous gums, and the effect of such wholesale destruction would be, he believed, that they would actually exhaust their bush by the time they discovered its full value.

Major HEAPHY, V.C., supported the motion, as for many years past the fact had been patent that in the forests of New Zealand the best timber was not only decreasing in the natural order of demand, but from wanton and unnecessary waste. In the kauri forests in the North the small timber was almost always destroyed in order to get out the larger logs, and so small saplings, which might in a few years be very useful, were entirely lost. The Pohutokawa timber that used to fringe the coast of Auckland was now almost disappearing from being cut down for firewood instead of the legitimate purposes of ship-building or otherwise; and he had only to draw attention nearer still to the wretched appearance presented by the hills from Lowry Bay to the first gorge on the Hutt, caused by the wanton destruction of the bush timber that used to grow upon them; and he might add that he believed that in many instances the fires that took place not only destroyed the timber but also the vegetation and the soil for years, and he had seen many large tracts so rendered unfertile from the imprudent manner in which the country had been burnt. It had occurred to him often that if a portion of the funds accruing from the license fees for bush-cutting were appropriated to the maintenance of rangers to watch these forests, it would be a very useful course; part of their duty being to plant English seed from time to time where the Native timber had been used, and thus provision would be made for the future wants of the community, as well as insuring the forests against future wanton waste. He could conceive nothing more miserable in appearance than a country where the bush-timber had been destroyed, and more than that, where the kauri had been destroyed it was succeeded by a growth of the wild raspberry, utterly preventing all transit, and offering great obstacles to improvement.

Mr. BARFF almost regretted to see the motion placed on the Paper in its present form, and would suggest its alteration so as to make its application local, for although the honorable member seemed to consider the whole of New Zealand as placed in the same circumstances, he might point out that nearly the whole land in the district to which he belonged was so covered by timber, that an acre, costing perhaps £2 to purchase, cost £50 to clear; and in their district at least he thought they should be permitted to take some steps to destroy it without being interfered with by unnecessary legislation. He would therefore suggest to the honorable member to make the motion apply locally, or he should have to move an amendment for the preservation of his own district, and suggest the word "destruction" for "conservation," as the timber on the West Coast for hundreds of square miles was the great obstacle to the settlement of the country.

Mr. REID presumed the Government would only take those steps where the necessity occurred for preservation. He thought the matter one deserving serious attention; and last session it was brought before the Provincial Council of Otago on resolutions drawn up by a Select Committee, but they were thrown out by a majority of one, the result being that the forest lands there were left open for sale, which he believed would be ultimately to the great detriment of the Province. The object of the Committee was, that while leaving the use of the timber to settlers, a stop should yet be put to the wilful waste occurring to the public forests of the country, and he thought it was time that some authoritative body, having the welfare of the settlements at heart, should step in and do so; while, as he thought, the effect of the sale of the forests might be their passing into the hands of capitalists merely as a matter of speculation or as ornament to an estate. In Otago, he might point out, certain districts were surveyed and laid off with bush reserves for all time, and after settlers had purchased their land, in the full belief that the bush