

PART I.
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Parliamentary
Debate, 1871.

useful and beneficial to the country generally; but he could also understand that a person might plant a block of land, and then, having got his two acres for every one so planted, dig up the trees on the planted land. As far as investment was concerned, he believed that a crop of timber was quite as remunerative as a crop of wheat; indeed, there was no more profitable one than that of blue gum, except that the return for it was slow in coming in; but if a man could afford to lie out of his money for a few years, he would make more by it, perhaps, than by anything else; and it must be remembered that where he was benefiting the public he was also doing good to himself.

Mr. D. McLEAN thought it might very well be left to the Committee. No doubt more timber than they at present had was required, as any one must see who, like himself, had travelled through the country, and had seen the primitive forests rapidly passing away. He fully acknowledged the necessity of the proposed measure, and felt sure the country would be materially benefited by it.

Mr. J. E. BROWN hoped that the suggestion to extend the operation of the Bill throughout the Colony would be adopted, and that the honorable member for Heathcote would see his way clear to adopt it. Nothing was more necessary or important than the planting of timber trees in certain parts of the country. He was aware, from disagreeable experience, that planting was sometimes a risky and expensive business. Two years ago he had planted ten acres of land with gum trees, and after some months every tree was destroyed in one night by frost. It was not the mere planting, but the protection of the trees, which made the cost, which in his own case he had found was about £3 an acre; and the experience of other persons in Canterbury confirmed him in this opinion. He thought the Bill did not provide sufficient encouragement to planters, who should, according to his view, receive four and not two acres, as proposed, for every one planted, as the value of land varied very much throughout the Colony.

Mr. THOMSON said there could be only one opinion as to the desirability of encouraging the planting of forest trees. His objection to the measure was that it did not go far enough. It appeared to refer almost entirely to land already purchased. It seemed to say to those people who already had land, "For every acre you plant, you will receive two acres," but there was no provision made for planting trees in new districts. No doubt a person could purchase, say, fifty acres of land, and after he had planted it he could claim 100 acres. The land he would choose would be land adjoining his former purchase, but, by the time he was in a position to claim it, the land might have been bought by another person. It was very desirable that some arrangement should be made by which any one who intended to plant land with forest trees should not be compelled to pay the price of the land which he proposed to plant. The Provincial Council of Otago had considered the question of encouraging people to plant forest trees. The Land Bill now before the House contained a clause bearing on this point. The clause, however, provided for the planting of trees only in new districts. He considered it equally desirable to encourage people to plant trees in districts that were already settled. Canterbury had confined its attention to old districts and Otago to new districts. He thought the two Provinces might well take leaves out of each other's books. He thought there was an objection in not fixing a maximum as well as a minimum. Why should inducements be held out to a man to plant the whole of his land? They should hold out inducements to plant only a portion, say from one-tenth or one-fifth of the whole area. He had much pleasure in supporting the Bill, but he hoped the honorable member would take steps to extend its provisions to land not already occupied. He had heard that in the Canterbury plains the wind was sometimes so strong, the sheep had to hold on by the tussocks. It was in such places that plantations were required.

Mr. MURRAY said it was proposed to give two acres of ground for every one planted, but the price of land throughout New Zealand varied, and, in order to make the measure applicable to all the Provinces, he would suggest that land orders should be granted so that in Canterbury a man would get two acres and in Otago four acres, and where land was worth only 10s. per acre, he would get eight acres for each one planted. Another advantage to encourage the planting of trees would be for the Government to give good and useful tree seeds. This was already done in Canterbury, and also to some extent in Otago. He believed Californian pines grew well, but blue gums were uncertain, and in order to learn what kinds would be best, it would be well that the Botanical Society should make experiments to see what trees could be cultivated to most advantage. He quite agreed with honorable members who had spoken with regard to the advantage of plantations, and would give some instances of the profits derived from planting. He knew one property in Scotland that brought in a rental of £240 per annum, which, chiefly by planting trees, had been so improved that the rental had increased to £1,400; and on the Duke of Athol's large estate in Perthshire, lands which, before trees were introduced, were worth a rental of only 4d. per acre, had by planting become worth 4s. per acre for grazing purposes alone, in addition to the handsome profit derived from the trees planted. Besides the advantages of shelter to stock, especially beneficial in New Zealand with our high cold wind, a great advantage was gained from the protection given to cereals, for those high winds were very detrimental to the proper and profitable cultivation of corn. He would suggest to the honorable gentleman who introduced the Bill that he should so alter it as to give to the whole of New Zealand the benefit he proposed to confer upon Canterbury.

Mr. REID said he took considerable interest in the subject of the encouragement of plantations. In the Province of Otago the timber reserves had been denuded of timber to a considerable extent, and a great deal of waste had been displayed in making use of the forests there.