

this motion should be carried, because a Royal Commission would be of no practical use; and even if it made recommendations to the Government, they might not be able to be carried out.

Mr. SWANSON thought the speeches of the honorable member for the Thames and of the Native Minister might have been appropriately delivered when the Timber Floating Bill was under discussion. That was not a measure which tended to preserve the forests. It meant simply that all the trees nearest the banks of the streams, no matter how small they might be, were to be cut down, and the remains left to get dry and set fire to the trees of the district around, thereby destroying hundreds of times as many as had been used. The streams were widened and the water shallowed by the very act of driving timber down them, while not half the timber cut could be floated down. It would be very hard to preserve the forests. He believed the very best of our trees would not grow until after one forest had grown up into old trees. He had never seen young kauri trees grow to anything more than small scrub, except in an old forest, where they grew up and replaced the old trees. It would be very hard to preserve these kauri forests, and, unless great care was taken, there would not be a kauri tree in the Colony in the next generation. It would, however, be wise to take such measures as would enable them to get the full value of the timber while it lasted, and not allow timber to be wasted as it was by being driven down creeks. From some kauri trees 70 or 80 feet of clean plank, without a flaw, could be got, if it were cut in a proper way; but in order to float it down creeks it had to be cut in very short lengths, and 24 feet was considered a good length for such timber. Nevertheless, a Bill had been brought in to perpetuate these wasteful practices, and passed by a House which wished to conserve the forests of the country. As to the Royal Commission, if they employed some intelligent bushmen to inquire into the matter, they might get some valuable information; but if they had a Royal Commission of the usual sort, they would get a very learned report, but very little real information, while the Commission would cost a great deal of money.

Motion negatived.

PART I.
Parliamentary
Debate, 1873.

II.—RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES.

COMMITTEE ON COLONIAL INDUSTRIES, 1870.

Dr. HECTOR, in reply to Mr. O'Neill, said,—“The rapid destruction of the native forests I consider to be most wasteful, and as having the effect of rapidly reducing the natural resources of the country. It is not at all necessary that the forest should be completely removed in the way that it usually is, either for the purpose of agricultural settlement or the obtaining of timber for mills, firewood, or fencing. The thinnings of the forest would be ample in most cases to supply all the latter wants. By carelessly opening up tracts of forest, and especially the firing of the dead forests, the young growth of trees which comes up to supply the place of the trees that are removed is wholly arrested, and in a short time the air and sun dry up the surface soil of good quality which characterizes freshly-cleared bush land, and it is washed away by the rains. Large tracts of land in the north of Auckland which naturally possess great capabilities for agriculture, have been rendered absolutely worthless for centuries to come, without a great expenditure, by the above wasteful process. With reference to drug plants, I may say that there are many native shrubs which possess medicinal qualities which have not yet been investigated.

Colonial
Industries
Committee, 1870.
Appendix, H.—1.

The Committee, Hon. Mr. Waterhouse being Chairman, reported,—“That it is desirable, with a view to encouraging the planting of timber in the treeless regions of the Middle Island, that persons planting timber trees upon unsold Crown lands should, upon terms to be fixed by the Government, be secured in the freehold of the country so planted out, either by pre-emptive right of purchase or by free gift. The strong winds prevailing over many parts of New Zealand greatly tend to check the operations of agriculture, while the open and shelterless state of the country causes the soil to become much more readily dried and parched up than would otherwise be the case. If land occupiers could be induced annually to plough up and sow with the Tasmanian black wattle a few acres of land, the shelter so much desired would be obtained at a cost comparatively trifling, a supply of good fuel would speedily be provided, and a valuable article, now much required by our tanners, and at present imported from a distance, would be procured on the spot.

COMMITTEE ON COLONIAL INDUSTRIES, 1873.

This Committee, of which Mr. W. A. Murray was Chairman, recommended “That the Government should invite the various Provincial Governments to consider how best to prevent the wasteful destruction of the forests of the Colony, and to supply statistics and recommendations for the consideration of Parliament;” and should also “continue to procure considerable quantities of the most approved tree seeds, and should sell them at cost price to associations, nurserymen, and individuals; and should also, by way of experiment, procure seeds of the olive, hickory, and cork trees, for the growth of which a large part of the Colony seems well suited.”

Committee, 1873.
Appendix, I.—4.