

couple of years ago Mr W. A. Graham, of Hamilton, mentioned the beet-root-growing business for sugar to me, and after we had had a long conversation about it he asked me to look into the matter so as to compare his statements with my experience of it. Therefore about two years ago I took the matter up again, and I had a very lengthy correspondence on this matter with Messrs. Dyer and Co., of San Francisco. They control about thirty-five sugar-mills, and it is largely due to their courtesy that I am supplied with the latest figures. As far as New Zealand is concerned, the industry would be, of course, one of very great importance, and when you consider, Mr Chairman and gentlemen, that you consume in this country approximately 55,000 tons of sugar per annum, for which you pay approximately £1,000,000 sterling, you will be surprised in the days to come, when you do manufacture your own sugar, that you had not started doing so long before. This 55,000 tons of sugar would require, with beets at a rate of about 15 per cent. of sugar, about 600,000 tons of beets. Now, to grow 600,000 tons of beets you would require about 40,000 acres of land. Under the British four-course system this would really mean that the beet-sugar industry in New Zealand would employ about 160,000 acres of land. To manufacture the 55,000 tons of sugar a plant would be required of a capacity of 6,000 tons of beets per day, and the plant to manufacture the 55,000 tons of sugar would cost, roughly speaking, £1,200,000 for, say, six factories in various places. Now, gentlemen, from the investigations I have made I think it has been conclusively proved that you can grow beet-root of the right quality and quantity per acre to produce sugar, and I have come to this conclusion that, whether the beet-root industry is introduced by the Government or by a private company, the same thing should happen in either case, and that is, they would import an expert from Europe or the United States, because we have not an expert in this country who could definitely advise on this important matter. The beet-root industry will either be a big success or an absolute failure. For a private company to start the industry it would, of course, require similar conditions as laid down in the second Part of your Bill, because a private concern would not for a moment risk £200,000 and buy 50,000 acres of land unless they were as certain as possible that the industry would be a success in this country; otherwise they would not start it. The beet-sugar industry carries, of course, a large number of great advantages for a country, and I have written out here in a short note the various advantages, and if you permit me I will hand it in, but I would mention that these advantages are from the United States point of view, and they have been actually experienced there, but I think we have a right to assume that they would in a similar way apply to this country—“(1.) Beet-culture makes good farmers. A beet-grower soon learns, if he did not know it before, that the best crop will only yield satisfactory results when it receives proper attention, the quality of the beets is especially dependent on the thoroughness of the cultural methods followed. (2.) Relative certainty of the crop: Sugar-beets are a more certain crop than most other agricultural crops, and beets are not liable to damage through rain, like potatoes. (3.) Price known in advance. Sugar-beets are the only crop a farmer can grow the price of which is guaranteed beforehand, so that he can feel certain at planting-time that he will get at least fair returns for his labour when the harvest is delivered. (4.) High returns per acre. The returns per acre of land planted to beets will be higher than can possibly be obtained in the case of cereals, and will be likely to be as high or higher than those of any crop, potatoes not excepted, when the returns for a series of years are considered. (5.) Employment of field labourers. A considerable amount of work that calls for extra help has to be done in the beet-field at the time of thinning and harvesting. This labour can be done by persons not able or accustomed to do hard field-work, as old people, cripples, women, and children, and a large amount of money is thus distributed in beet districts to such help each year, which distribution makes itself felt in all trades and business enterprises in the community. The sugar-beet culture as an industry will prove very suitable to our Maori race, whose instincts are admittedly agricultural, and who are owners of large areas of very suitable lands for the growth of sugar-beets. (6.) Cash basis for payment of beets. The large amount of money distributed among the farmers flows into every avenue of trade, leaving its profits behind, finding its way to the banks, to be again forwarded on its beneficent mission, enlivening and enriching all branches of trade and assisting the establishment of new industries. Population materially increases; town lots command a double price, farming lands are in increased demand at greatly increased prices, bank deposits are sometimes tripled and quadrupled; debts and mortgages are paid off, and new farming-implements and pianos take their places, abundant prosperity obtains everywhere, and civilization is advanced. In the United States, Germany, and France the area devoted to beet-sugar growing has increased three or four times in value. This is the simple history of the industry wherever it has been established in a proper location for the growth of beets. (7.) Value of refuse products. As previously stated, two by-products are obtained at beet-sugar factories which form valuable feeds for farm animals—viz., beet-pulp and molasses. The dried pulp may be kept indefinitely and can be shipped great distances. According to chemical analysis and practical feeding experiments, one ton of beet-pulp is worth at least from 5s. to 7s. The cost of stock-feeding is reduced about one-half by using beet-pulp, while the supply of milk is increased and the fat remains about the same. Beet-pulp is also an excellent feed for pigs. About 50 lb. per head per day is a fair allowance for milch cows and steers, and 5 lb. per head to sheep. There is one remark I should like to make, and that is this: I would never attempt for one moment to rely on the farmers for the first few years to grow the beets. They will do it by-and-by, but, to start with, the farmers would be absolutely hopeless. To begin with, they would have to be educated up to it, and that would take considerable time. The labour question is a big one in connection with it, but nowadays so much of it is done by the aid of machinery, as Mr Buchanan will no doubt know: they have invented new machinery by the aid of which only half the amount of manual labour is now required than a few years ago. To begin with, it will mean to grow beets by the 20,000 acres, but the 5-acre business for the small farmer will come. As to the second Part of the Bill, it is, of course, a matter for you to consider, but you can well understand that if