

side of the Rimutaka Hill they had been burnt away for the purpose of constructing roads there; and the result was that there had been such floods as had never been known there before, clearing away culverts, bridges, and everything before them. The same thing had occurred in the Hutt Valley. All this disaster had arisen, in his opinion, from the reckless removal of the timber. Beyond this, it must be remembered that timber would not last for ever, and every year showed that it was necessary to go farther back for the timber required for any works, and thereby increasing considerably the cost of timber. In Canterbury, indeed, it had been found necessary to go nearly as far as Wairarapa for the purpose of obtaining sleepers for the railways there. He entirely approved of the Bill, and only regretted that the honorable member who had introduced it had not made it applicable to the whole Colony.

Mr. PEACOCK would support the Bill, but did not think that the honorable member for Heathcote had given sufficient encouragement to planters. He thought any person should get, for every acre he planted with timber trees, and properly attended to for a given time, a grant of four acres. If honorable members knew how expensive fencing was for those who lived on the plains far distant from timber, he felt certain they would consider that to offer a man only two acres for his trouble in trenching and planting one, would not encourage him to lay out much labour or money on his land. The honorable member should be careful not to defeat the object by offering too little, thus rendering the Act inoperative.

Mr. GISBORNE considered the Bill a most important one for Canterbury and all other Provinces which, like it, now luxuriated in timber and vegetation, but would soon become deficient in these particulars. He would suggest to the honorable member the desirability of referring the question to the Waste Lands Committee, with a view to extending its application to all parts of the Colony.

Sir D. MONRO said he was much indebted to the honorable member for bringing forward the measure. Inhabiting, as he (Mr. Hall) did, a part of the country destitute of timber, he doubtless knew, from painful experience, the evils arising from that state of things. In the Province of Nelson there were large tracts of land destitute of timber, containing good soil, and capable of supporting a large population if there were only timber for their necessary purposes. There was nothing more calculated to add to the wealth of the country than the growth of forest trees, in many parts of it timber being one of the chief necessities of the settlers. He should very much like to see the operation of the Bill extended to all parts of the Colony, and he trusted that his honorable friend would consent to such a modification of it as would enable its benefits to be shared by the other Provinces. He had much pleasure in supporting the Bill, and felt that it was entitled to that consideration from the House which attached to a measure of great practical value.

Mr. REEVES said that, in common with other honorable members, he would support the Bill, as it was a most useful one; at the same time he must deprecate the idea contained in the suggested amendment of the member for Lyttelton, as he considered it was in a wrong direction. That honorable member said that any person planting an acre of land with timber trees should receive a free grant, not of two acres as proposed by the Bill, but of four. Now, he thought it was the duty of the House to be very careful how they consented to the appropriation of the public estate by free grants. The intention of the Bill was, as he looked upon it, to give encouragement to persons who should be disposed to plant their land with timber trees, not to give them full compensation for so doing; and when they considered that this planting of lands would increase not only the value of them, but also of those adjacent, by the time these plantations were grown up the granted land would be worth five times its former price; and it would, he conceived, be a mistake to grant land in such a wholesale fashion to persons who, after all, would be making a very judicious and paying investment. It was true that the investment would give no immediate profit, but it was pretty certain that, for those who could afford to remain out of the interest of their money for some time, there were few more remunerative investments than that of planting forest trees on their land. He hoped the honorable member would not lose sight of the fact that the intention of the Bill was to encourage, not to compensate, the planter. He had been informed by a gentleman in Otago, where it was proposed merely to give the land to the planter which he should have stocked with forest trees, that many applicants were found to accept those terms; and he therefore really thought that, if such was the case, a grant of two acres for every one planted in terms of the Bill would be quite enough for the Province of Canterbury. There was another point he considered it important to mention. He thought the Bill should contain a limitation of the extent of land for the planting of which any one person should be entitled to a free grant. It was not likely, perhaps, that any one would go in for planting a great extent of land with timber trees, but he thought it would be satisfactory to the public mind if the limit were placed at, say, 200 or 250 acres.

Mr. SWANSON said that the Bill in its present shape presented a difficulty, for as he read it, it seemed that the person planting the land was forthwith to give it up to the public. The 2nd clause said, "If any person shall plant any land . . . with forest trees he shall be entitled to receive for every acre of land so planted a free grant of two acres of waste lands of the Crown." Surely, if the Bill was to be such a great public benefit, it must be meant that the planter should have his planted land and the two additional acres as well; but the Bill certainly did not say so. In regard to this planting, he thought the public authorities should be applied to, so that they might have a voice in settling in what parts the plantations might most beneficially be made. He could quite understand that a large belt of trees, planted on a great plain, would be very