

PRAIRIE TREE PLANTING IS GOOD BUSINESS

Toronto Globe Editorial.

For three successive seasons, in certain parts of southern Saskatchewan and Alberta, conditions have been such that the farmers have failed to secure a crop. Many of the recent settlers in these areas have come almost to the end of their resources, and have neither the means nor the will to continue. Recent heavy rains which have broken the drought—unhappily too late to benefit the wheat crop—may enable owners of live stock to secure enough coarse grain and pasturage to carry their animals through the winter, but at the best the loss will be very serious, and, despite the prevalent and infectious optimism of the west, there will be a disposition to pull up stakes in those parts of the region afforded by the crop failure that are not assured moisture by irrigation.

While the failure this year has been due to lack of rain at the critical part of the crop season, much of last year's loss was the result of high winds which, after the grain had been put in under fair conditions, swept over the bald prairie, dried out the surface of the soil, and caused it to drift like the sand before a desert storm. In both cases belts of trees would have proved invaluable, for there is no doubt at all that forest growth not only conserves moisture, but that it has much to do in moderating the strength and direction of the winds. In a former geologic period the Canadian West was densely clad with forests, for the whole country is underlaid with coal that could have been the result only of forest growth. It was a country also of great swamps and watercourses, which provided sustenance and shelters for the saurian monsters, the remains of which are found in the Red Deer Valley and elsewhere, and that when restored and put on exhibition in natural history museums compel our wonder.

The puny efforts of man cannot renew the tropical humidity of the Alberta and Saskatchewan of that far-distant period, but forest growth should be done. Vast sums have been spent on opening up the country and providing it with railways and the facilities for growing and marketing grain. That great investment must clearly be followed up by forestry operations on a large scale.



CUTTING A NEW ROAD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
Note how carefully the debris is piled for burning
in the centre.

Temporary expedients to set upon their feet settlers who have lost all through crop failures are all very well in their way, but they will in the end prove far more costly than a well-considered project extending over a long series of years providing for the planting and care of trees in the semi-arid regions. If this is not done there may be a reproduction on this continent of the tragedy of southwestern Asia, where the destruction of the forests has produced and perpetuated aridity over vast stretches of a region that was wonderfully fertile and provided with unfailing supplies of moisture. In Sheistan at this moment, "the wind of a hundred days" blows over arid and