

#### G. FIORDLAND EXPEDITION

During the year Cabinet approved of an expenditure of £7,000 to enable an expedition to be conducted into the Fiordland National Park on behalf of the following Departments and for the following purposes :—

- Department of Scientific and Industrial Research : Scientific knowledge of botany, geology, and entomology.
- Department of Lands and Survey : Surveying the area and investigating proposals regarding hydro-electric power possibilities.
- State Forest Service : Conduct of a forest survey.
- Marine Department : Investigations of fresh-water fishery matters.
- Department of Tourist and Health Resorts : Opening up of further area for trampers and other tourists.
- Department of Internal Affairs : Matters in connection with deer control and absolutely-protected birds.
- Dominion Museum : Obtaining of specimens for exhibition.

The proposal to form such an expedition arose from visits made to the area by Colonel J. K. Howard, of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, in order to ascertain the environmental changes in the wapiti in its new habitat. It was considered that valuable scientific data in the fields of botany, entomology, geology, and fishery biology could be obtained from what was virtually an unknown area.

United States personnel forming part of the expedition are—

- Dr. Olaus J. Murie, President of the Wilderness Society of America. Dr. Murie is a world authority on deer and their habits and has evolved a technique for estimating wildlife animal populations ;
- Mr. D. Murie ; and
- Colonel J. K. Howard.

The expenses of Dr. Murie and Mr. D. Murie in coming to New Zealand and while in this country, except while actually with the expedition, are being met by grants under the Fullbright Act by the American Board of Foreign Scholarships.

It was considered that this Department would gain valuable data through biologists of the Wildlife Branch working in collaboration with Dr. Murie. The officers concerned would gain a thorough grounding in the methods used in the United States for this work which would facilitate similar future studies in New Zealand. The assessment of populations is urgently required in connection with the control of several of the worst animal pests in this country, and techniques used in connection with wapiti should be readily adaptable to other species.

It was also considered that participation in the expedition would—

- (a) Provide a unique opportunity for the study of the development of an animal transported to an entirely new environment and, until recently, isolated from animals of related species.
- (b) Permit of the further extension of the studies of the Fiordland National Park area which have already been carried out over a considerable number of years and would be particularly advantageous in enabling a study of means of communication and other facilities.
- (c) The study of other forms of wildlife should provide useful information as to present numbers and distribution of such rare species as kakapo and kiwi.
- (d) Enable the continuation of studies already commenced as to the effect of exotic animals on the native vegetation.

The expedition, of which the field leader is Mr. R. V. McKane, of the State Forest Service, commenced work in the area in February, 1949, and was continuing at the close of the year.