

# National Parks

**I**N our issue of August 1949 we expressed our opinion that "in New Zealand . . . forest and bird destruction, the introduction of exotic flora and fauna have produced a series of problems which actually threaten our material welfare. Quite apart from sentiment, the position is serious. Therefore, in implementing a National Park policy, our objectives must be not only the safeguarding of wild scenery for public enjoyment, but also the strict preservation of our remaining forests and birds for economic reasons, such as soil conservation".

The Director General of Lands has stated in an address that "National Parks should be held in trust for the benefit of the people, should be virgin country—the main principle of control being that of preserving them, as far as possible, in their natural state, while at the same time providing adequate facilities for the public to visit and enjoy them". This official opinion coincides with our own as quoted above, namely that **preservation** of our forests and natural scenery is the key note—rather than any attempt to "**improve**" what nature has provided.

## Reform Necessary

We have been assured that legislation is to be brought down to establish an efficient and practical policy of control and management of our National Parks. Upon investigation we believe the chief weaknesses, in the past, have been no uniformity of control, no settled over-all policy, some evidence of conflicting departmental interests, too large Boards of Management, a tendency to appoint members by virtue of some office held rather than for their practical knowledge of how to manage the areas and, finally, no settled plan for providing the necessary finance.

Canada and the United States have devised sound schemes of management and control of their Parks, and provide an example which we could follow with advantage, with modifications to suit local conditions.

In the first place there should be a Central Authority, established by Parliament, which will be responsible for the general policy, administration and control of all existing and future National Parks.

Secondly, local Boards or Committees should be established to carry out the policy of the Central Authority in each area.

Lastly Parliament should provide, by Annual Vote, an adequate sum of money to carry out the Authority's work. Such annual grant would be spent as decided by the Authority.

Both the Authority and the Board should, in our opinion, consist of fewer members than obtains at present on Park Boards. Experience proves that a small body, say, 6 or 8 practical men is much more efficient than one of large numbers. It is to be hoped that this condition will be recognised in the proposed legislation.

It is also, we think, essential that those appointed should have intimate knowledge of the areas to be administered, and of the peculiar characteristics of our natural forest for, **it must be remembered that preservation of each area in its natural state is one of the objects of National Parks.**

In saying this we do not suggest that the areas should not be available for public enjoyment. This can be provided for by a careful plan of tracks and possibly roads giving access to the areas, provided that it is planned so as to do as little harm as possible to the surroundings. It is this proviso that calls for men on the Authority who know our bush from practical experience.

[NOTE.—Since the above was written and before going to press, the National Parks Bill has been introduced into Parliament by the Hon. Mr. Corbett, Minister of Lands. This will be discussed in a future issue.—Ed.]