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Editorial Comment

The Coming Age of Research

In our issue of August under the accompanying heading we discussed the question of State organisation of scientific research. Since then, the matter has been well ventilated in the daily press, the discussion in Auckland having been particularly useful and informative. Our university science professors have ably advocated lines of research, showing the direct advantage to the farming and commercial classes to be derived from well-planned work. Care has also been taken to urge the value of scientific work which, on the face of things, appears to bear only remotely on the practical things of commerce. New Zealand is full of opportunities for research. Even its geography has not been fully investigated. Few countries are so marvellously endowed by nature. The Dominion has been called "a pocket edition of the world's geology," and there are things geological yet to be discovered. A good start was made in this work, but the clamant demand for roads, railways, and more settlement has kept the purse-strings tight where geological surveys are concerned; in fact the work would have been still more curtailed but for the anxiety of New Zealanders to learn the possibilities of various oil indications in the North Island. The Hon. G. W. Russell, Minister of Internal Affairs, is evidently watching the discussion with sympathetic and enlightened interest, but it is significant of his poor estimate of legislator's concern for scientific research that he only ventured to ask Parliament for a grant of £250 for the purpose. He shrewdly takes notice of Mr. A. D. Bell's suggestion that the mica-schist deposits of Otago should be turned to account in the production of phosphates, which are used in large quantities in New Zealand's primary industry, because this proposal will win much parliamentary support from the farming community, which really dominates Parliament. A lengthy report was submitted to the Minister by Dr. Allan Thomson, director of the