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Conservation of the Soil

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I wish to express my pleasure on being asked to chair the Conservation Section of the Tenth New Zealand Science Congress. This is the first occasion that conservation has received the status of a Section in a New Zealand Science Congress.

Conservation of natural resources is a continuing process whereby man's increasing knowledge is applied to produce with continuing increments not only man's immediate needs of food and shelter, but also the opportunity and facilities to develop the whole of man's potential within a changing environment.

In New Zealand, the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council is the authority dealing with soil conservation and flood protection. There are other organisations and groups of people actively participating in conservation. The National Parks Authority administers 4,528,327 acres of land where the purpose is to reserve natural regions in perpetuity for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and safeguard those acres from cultural development which depends upon the plough, fire, power saw and domestic animals.

Legal restrictions on man to try and prevent critical depopulation of some marine and fresh water fish are the outcome of some understanding of the value of conservation practices. The Regional Planning Authorities that hope to provide orderly urban and industrial expansion and, inter alia, prevent the waste of fertile land provide an aspect of conservation.

In advocating the protection of the native forests and birds and the preservation of sanctuaries and scenic reserves, the Forest and Bird Protection Society are enthusiastic conservationists.

The Tussock Grassland and Mountain Lands Institute was conceived in the hope that it would be in the vanguard of soil and water conservation thought and activities in the highlands of the South Island.

The recent proposal to establish a Nature Conservation Council to advise the Government on the conservation of native fauna and flora and natural features of scientific interest or places of lasting natural beauty is a very healthy sign in the development of this country.