

The Government—and New Zealand

THE new Prime Minister, the Hon M. J. Savage, and his colleagues have declared emphatically that they wish to work for all the people all the time, and they have asked for the co-operation of public-spirited representatives (official or unofficial) of all sections of the community.

Various statements of Mr. Savage and his ministerial associates show that they have a clear understanding of the truth that the making and maintenance of a good standard of living for the general public depend on a well-planned development of natural resources—a perpetual production of real wealth—food, clothing, fuel, shelter. They know that they have to think and act on the plane of production—primary and secondary.

Therefore the basic governmental responsibility is protection of the soil on which the people's living is dependent. It is another case of "save the surface and save the lot." Alas, what an enormous penalty New Zealand is suffering to-day for shortsighted selfishness and stupidity which have cleared the way for disastrous erosion in many parts of the Dominion!

The greatest problem confronting the United States of America to-day does not lie in financial re-arrangements and re-adjustments—which are matters of opinion among persons of conflicting interests—but in the saving of the soil by the checking of erosion.

"Erosion in the Empire" is the title of a very arresting article in a recent issue of "United Empire" (published by the Royal Empire

Society). "True patriotism," the writer declares, "demands not only a call to arms to fight human aggression but to stem the tide of the ever-encroaching forces of erosion. The greatest problem of all facing the Empire to-day is not political nor racial, nor is it essentially defence by armaments; it is geological, for without arable lands and a good water supply the British Empire would soon cease to exist."

Here, then, is ground on which all New Zealanders can work together for mutual benefit, without regard to political opinions or party ties. Here is ground on which everybody can support the Government in a policy which would be good for all the people, all the time.

Such a policy calls for a proper management of the remnants of the native forest and for regeneration in suitable areas; it calls for a cessation of ruinous destruction of forests on watersheds; it calls for a vigorous exterminating war against deer which are killing forests in high country; it calls for a careful control of gold-winning operations which have already laid waste large areas of country that would have yielded real wealth in perpetuity—materials for the maintenance of human life; it calls for common-sense planning and administration in the whole field of wild life.

New Zealand, which is remarkably hilly and mountainous, is alarmingly susceptible to soil erosion. The steepness of much of the country and the friable nature of the surface make the way easy for erosion when nature's protective forests are cut out or burnt out. This scouring of