

Concerning a Heritage of Basic Import.

A CONFERENCE of Acclimatisation Societies was held in Wellington on the 21st April, with the object of complying with the request of the Minister of Internal Affairs (The Hon. W. E. Parry) that Acclimatisation Societies "should either hang together or hang altogether." An effort was made in the desired direction. Much discussion took place with regard to the artificial rearing of game birds and the destruction of alleged and real enemies of game birds.

There is a great deal more that is relevant to the gamut of Acclimatisation Societies than such topics. What does this word mean? In brief, to acclimatize means "to habituate to a new climate." Whatever it is one wishes to acclimatize must be adapted to its environment. No reference, however, was made to the basic requirements essential to the conservation of game-birds—cover and food, especially winter food.

The most essential condition so far as the requirements of our native birds are concerned—restoration of the natural habitat—was entirely lost sight of, but for the notable exceptions of the remarks of Messrs. W. J. Parkin of Whangarei and H. J. Duigan of Wanganui. This latter gentleman stressed the desirability of planting winter berrying and nectar-producing plants in order to carry native birds through the winter period, and stated that excellent results had been obtained in his district because of such a policy.

The departmental Under-Secretary (Mr. J. W. Heenan) took up the skein with judicial nicety: "the efforts of societies and their members to preserve native birds went a long way toward disposing of the criticism that the societies were only rod and gun clubs. Ranging of protected birds could not be thoroughly efficient until there was at least a skeleton staff of qualified field officers, and he hoped that as finances permitted a field staff would be built up to co-operate with Acclimatisation Societies and other organizations in guarding native bird life."

It is certainly strange how human nature works on similar lines in various countries.

In the United States of America a number of similar conferences have been without avail in checking the decrease of game birds. Recently, however, matters reached a critical stage. President Roosevelt called a conference **of all interested** in the conservation of the country's natural resources. The result was the formation of a general Wild Life Federation. He has built something designed to preserve and protect a heritage.

Thousands of New Zealanders have not realized that it is due to the bush that water seeps instead of scours when the blessed rain falls like a sheet on mountain top and wooded slope and on the upland and lowland plains. It is our heritage (capable of expression in terms of money by the Government Statistician) that there is a maintenance of forest growth so that there shall be natural regeneration. If farming is a primary industry, and agriculture is to flourish, then conservation of natural resources is a basic matter of utmost importance. It is a condition precedent upon which depends the very existence of agricultural endeavour. The problems concerning the conservation of all the various branches of any country's manageable natural resources are inextricably inter-allied and inter-woven with one another, therefore no good and lasting national benefits can result from the calling together in conference of a group merely interested in one section, be it fish, game, native birds, forests or others. President Roosevelt's action in calling together all groups concerned was wise and statesmanlike. Prior to the President's action the many groups and sections had been divided largely into two main camps. On the one side was the disorganized majority standing for efficient conservation and on the other the organized minority consisting of ammunition manufacturers, various vested interests, and that section of the hunters whose vision does not extend further than an oncoming shooting season.

Owing to the lack of group-co-ordination in any visible attempts at conservation in New Zealand the results achieved so far are not only negligible but of a retrograde nature despite the fact that sufficient revenue is probably disbursed to attain tangible results with co-ordination.