

DEER: An Instance Of NON-PARTY POLICY

**Agriculture is Primary;
Natural Conservation is Basic.**

What About Deer Stalking?

None is so blind as he who has a biased outlook. Some deer-stalkers still are trying to arrest the Government's war on deer. In the April number of "N.Z. Fishing and Shooting Gazette," for instance, objection is taken to the declaration of the Minister of Internal Affairs (The Hon. W. A. Parry), "I am going to declare war on deer".

The voice of Lord Latymer, who is a stranger to the Dominion, is supported very enthusiastically by a section of deer stalkers. Lord Latymer has implied that he thinks it would be a wonderful thing for New Zealand if the deer running wild here were culled (or encouraged) so that sporadic stalkers might not only shoot the best deer, but also bear away to taxidermist and smoke-room trophies of the chase as real evidence of "my stalking and shooting prowess" in that wonderland New Zealand'.

Deer are destroying saplings; saplings replace dead trees. Deer are trampling to destruction the ferns and mosses on the forest floor. The ferns, mosses and covering prevent excessive flooding. Deer are destroying forests and causing top soil erosion and floods—denuding higher lands and causing economic losses on the low lands. Deer are destroying food and cover for trout in rivers.

Now New Zealand forests are the result of thousands of years of unique isolation from animal molestation. The deer stalkers would like to have the gate opened so that deer with many-pointed antlers would roam our forests and increase year by year the destruction that is already very grave. Government hunters should shoot only rabble and leave better deer as attractions for tourists. So say some deer-stalkers.

A forest consisting only of older trees and with neither seedlings, saplings nor natural floor covering is the forest created by deer. That means a forest doomed to extinction. A New Zealand with no forest would be a gaunt desert-like land with its fertility washed into the sea; its native birds but memories; its hillsides rocky; its plains

stony and sterile. The rivers would be converted into merely sporadic torrents, and would therefore contain no fish.

Such is the country that would be created if the desires of some deer-stalkers were heeded. But, alas for their cause! Recent reports suggest that the champion of "the deer do no harm section" (Lord Latymer) has changed his views and is now on the way to join that majority which he at one time dubbed as "fern fanatics."

Altruistic and whole-minded New Zealanders may be thankful for the fact that the late Government decided that deer must be exterminated if possible. The ex-Minister (the Hon. Sir Alexander Young) went to the wilds and saw for himself.

So profound, and so inevitable are the consequences of forest destruction that the issue is far beyond and above party politics. The forces are inexorable. The present Minister, the Hon. W. E. Parry, has displayed sincerity and some sound sense in his views on wild life to date. Best of all, he seems to be instilled with the single aim of doing the best thing for New Zealand, regardless of groups (personal or transitory), and petty interests. He has done more than follow the ex-Minister's lead. He has strengthened the attack.

Natural forces and natural factors in New Zealand are above and beyond all others. For such of us as dwell in towns, for whom the rain and the wind mean less than they should, imagination based on knowledge is needed to span for us the gaps in our outlook. Natural harmony may not be disturbed all at once in one day except by a holocaust, but so long as deer are in New Zealand the natural harmony is being disturbed every day, sapling by sapling, seedling by seedling. Such a toll accrues and is accruing, that nothing but non-party policy steadfastly pursued will save us and our sons from greater ruin than that caused to date. It is true enough to be tragic

that, because of the ravages of deer, much bush stands childless, dated and doomed.

Agriculture is primary; natural conservation is basic.



A Deer-barked Tree.