

# OUR FOREST POLICY

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## GOVERNMENT PROMISES A PROGRAMME OF PROGRESS

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WHEN our Forest Service was inaugurated we were told that our forests were not to be destroyed, but that they would be worked as a recurring crop, in perpetuity. We heard much about New Zealand leading the world in forestry. Many years have passed, and no attempt has yet been made to work our native forests in a scientific manner, perhaps owing to an unfortunate fundamental start in forest matters despite the fact that the Service contained much promising personnel.

Its operations have followed the methods of countries whose forests are vastly different from ours, and whose climate and all other conditions have nothing in common with New Zealand. It became practically a mere lumber concern like Canada and the United States, with a superadded system of planting exotics avowedly destined to take the place of the native forest.

Neither Canada's nor the U.S.A.'s forestry is suitable for application to New Zealand. Canada's forests have simply been exploited by great lumber concerns. "Cut out and get out" is the motto there. A forest system like India's is more suitable to the conditions and needs of New Zealand.

Long ago this country was advised to adopt the wise scientific plan of conservation and regeneration of timber supplies practised in India; but no. The indigenous forest capital was spent as fast as the State and the sawmillers could realise on it.

Under the wasteful system that has been practised for a century in New Zealand, the candle has been burnt at both ends. The timber capital has been expended without anything to show for it. Whether we like it or not we shall have to import timber for necessary purposes, and import it at a heavy cost.

There is now, however, one cheering word of authority to offset the melancholy record of tree-slaughter without replacement. In the Governor-General's speech delivered at the opening of Parliament this brief but important passage occurred. We give it in full here because it may have escaped the notice of many people:

**"Realising the importance of Forestry as a means of creating a valuable natural asset, and at the same time of providing employment, my Ministers have under consideration a long-term programme of indigenous forest improvement (having due regard for the necessity of providing for the better preservation of Native bush), in addition to the establishment of further exotic plantations."**

Such a programme is long overdue and we congratulate the Government upon the excellent scheme outlined. We shall look forward to a full explanation of the measures proposed.

In the meantime two suggestions seem in order:

(1.) "Improvement" should be more clearly defined. The only true improvement consists in regeneration of the original forest without the admixture by interplanting of a dangerous foreign element in the form of exotics.

(2.) The relative importance of native bush and exotics should be clearly established, bearing in mind the fact that no exotic plantations, useful as they are, are so vitally necessary as the original timber growth of the land.

In all our forests where milling is proceeding there is a great opportunity that must be seized, the saving of the young indigenous growth.

Is the fate of the devastated forests of the past to overtake those now being thrown open to axe and saw? Or will the beginning be made at last, to conserve the existing areas of white pine and red pine, and every other timber, by scientific methods of working and regeneration of the milled-over bush?