

THE NATIONAL STAMINA

— IS IT DEGENERATING? —

IT has been authoritatively stated that indications of race degeneration are already in evidence in New Zealand. Whether this be so or not at the present time may be a debatable point, but nevertheless, as surely as night follows day, such a happening is the natural outcome of soil deterioration. The fact that, over the larger part of the Dominion the top soil has lost its former richness is now generally recognised. Pastoralists find that the carrying capacity of many holdings has been considerably reduced during the last ten or fifteen years and that the stamina and health of their stock is progressively decreasing. Man depends upon the products of healthy soil to give him health and virility. The process of unchecked soil deterioration, resulting from sheet erosion, leads steadily down-hill to an ever-decreasing standard of living, a lack of force of character and of will to fight and work, ending finally in race destruction. Some of the many unmistakable signs of race deterioration are, strange to say, the encroachment by women upon what were men's domains in occupation and sport, the division of a nation into warring or quarrelling sections, and many other symptoms not noticed because they come about gradually.

Innumerable instances of this tendency to divide into antagonistic sections and then sub-sections are to be found on all sides, from capital versus labour down to every little village affair. Only a minority judges any matter with a national outlook. We have a notable instance at present of this sectional outlook in the controversy on wild life management or "control" as some people put it. Here we have those bodies who are interested in receiving the revenue from the taking or killing of fish and game, which are national property supported on the productivity of the soil, opposing a proposal which is aimed mainly at benefiting the hunters and fishermen whom these bodies claim to represent (presumably because the law says that licences must at present be paid to them.) In addition, the executives of these bodies, who are elected by a very few licence holders, seem to presume that they are the only section to be considered in the matter, regardless of the people as a whole, who, if they did but know it, are all more vitally affected, including the man on the land. The taxpayer does the paying, directly, by attempting to lessen the menace of mammals in our forests, and indirectly by the loss caused by extensive accelerated erosion accompanied by periodical excessive floods. These, in turn, are partly due to grave past blunders in the acclimatising of such creatures as deer. Many other factors with even more serious damaging powers, such as fire, over-grazing, mis-placed settlement, unscientific and injudicious timber-milling, work actively in co-operation in the destruction of Nature's preventive against excessive erosion, namely, the natural protective vegetation, be it forest or tussock. So the innumerable sections continue to war and quarrel, and get no further ahead, but rather go backward so far as the national well-being is concerned.

The Britisher is, however, always slow to move against wrongs and evils. He will suffer long and enduringly, but any day his national conscience may be aroused, and when this has happened he has been known to act at times in an extremely drastic manner, even to the cutting off of a king's head. One day, perhaps as the result of the ever-increasing damage caused by successive abnormal floods, the New Zealander will bestir himself. Then he will say, "Avaunt, self-seeking sections! Our country and its resources are for the nation and its children and children's children." When the New Zealander acts thus it may confidently be said that the race in New Zealand is not degenerating.

Half a million acres of restorable Kauri
Will twice pay the war debt. No Eastern houri
Could do more for an overtaxed man!
It may settle near twice the men on the land
That the two Land Acts, working hand-in-hand,
Did up to the outbreak of war—
Five thousand seven hundred and eighty.—*Sir David Hutchins, I.F.S.*