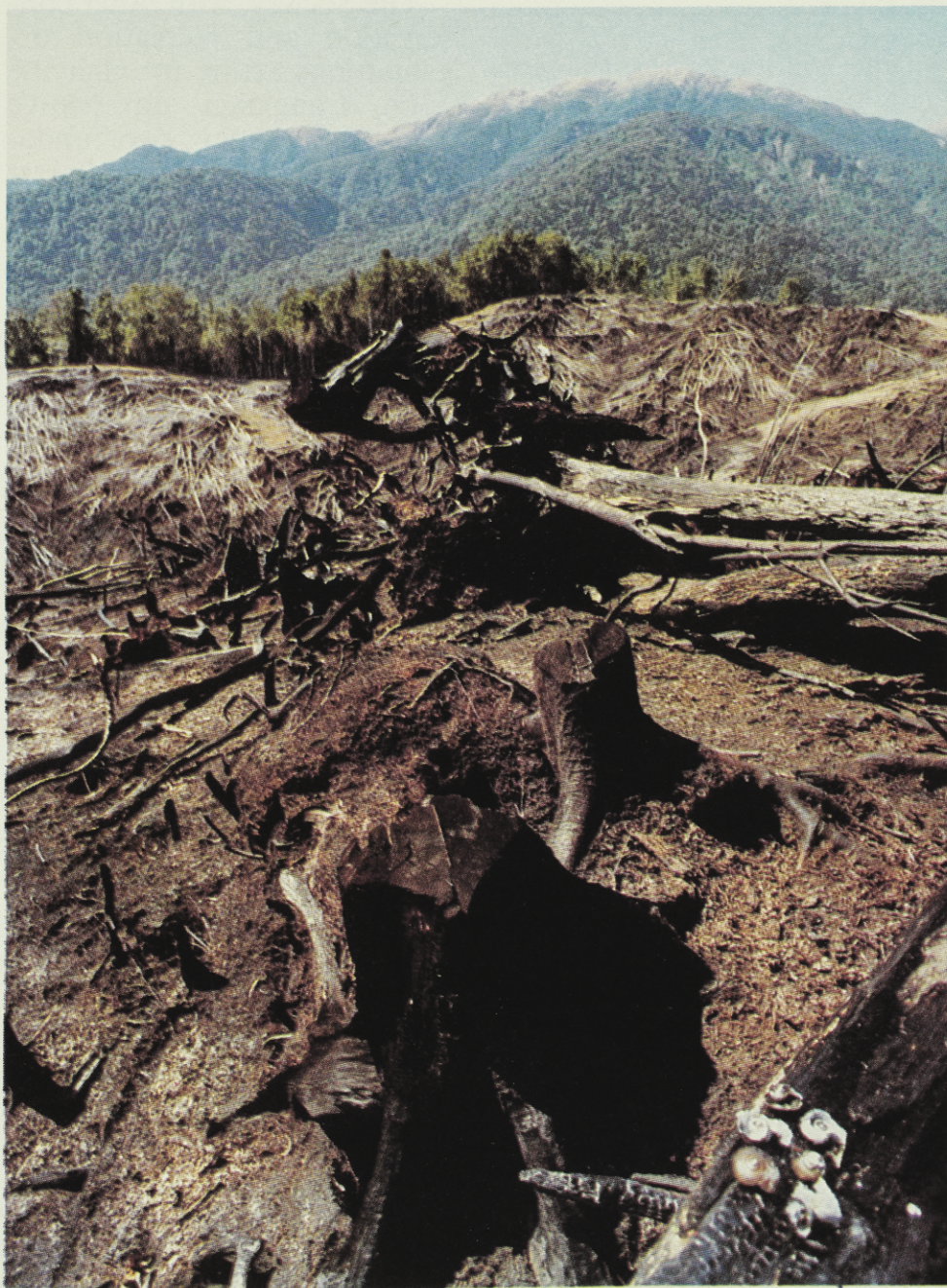


sating opportunities for employment and long-term community viability.

If this integrated approach is used, conservationist proposals are likely to accord with the aspirations of most New Zealanders. Recent experience with the Okarito and Pureora issues suggest that when conservationists can reach agreement on an appropriately balanced package, and communicate it effectively, we can be rewarded with political success.

Regional economy

From the beginning the Buller has had a boom-and-bust economy based on exploiting its natural resources of gold, timber, and coal just as fast as they could be extracted and sold. This resource rip-off philosophy is still current in the region, though much of the romance went out of it during the 20-year drop in coal prices and output that resulted in the Buller's population dwindling from 10 500 in 1951 to 8500 today.



Mokihinui State Forest, near Charming Creek. Native forest burn-offs are being undertaken by the Forest Service in the Buller in violation of the Government's Indigenous Forest Policy. In the right foreground are charred remnants of giant land snails. This species, *Powelliphanta lignaria rotella*, is a rare and endangered species which is "absolutely protected" under the Wildlife Act.

The result is that many thoughtful Buller residents are looking towards more sustainable sources of economic well-being for the future. And a renewable industry — agriculture — has now grown to become the district's biggest employer.

The timber industry has been declining for a long time through the progressive destruction of its resource base. Karamea's kahikatea forests were felled — almost to the last tree — and exported direct to Australia before 1930. The mills then concentrated on the forests rich in rimu. Throughout more than a century of intensive exploitation of the Buller forests not a tree was planted for the future.

Today there are four sawmills left, three of them very old, and two small processing enterprises. There is also a small work force engaged in road building, tree felling, and pine planting. Total employment in the Buller forest sector today is 96, which represents less than 4 percent of the region's jobs. Dependence on forestry in the Buller is therefore much less than in the rest of the West Coast, where forestry supports about 20 percent of the population.

The Buller's primary sources of prosperity, in order of importance, are agriculture (especially dairying), coal mining, and the cement industry. All three are undergoing substantial expansion of capacity and output. The fishing, tourism, clothing, and plastics industries are also significant sources of regional income. Servicing activities, especially the transport sector, are, of course, major employers in the district as well.

Growth opportunities

Where does the main growth potential lie? Coal's potential is attracting much attention,