



activists at many levels in groups throughout the country helped to promote Labour's 1984 election promise to establish a department of conservation.

The Cabinet decision on 16 September last to do just that will be recognized as one of the great decisions in the history of our relationship with our country. A wheel has come full circle: after a century and a half of European impact, Aotearoa has been assured of the stewardship her remaining natural landscapes have long needed.

The decision is of international importance and will be widely acclaimed as such. There is no force on earth that can prevail against a great idea whose time has come.

To quote again from *Our Forests Ourselves*: "The time has come, not to forget, but to forgive ourselves the past, to begin again in humility to relate to our land. Nature is not ours to 'conquer' but a community in whose life we share."

The richness of that community is spelled out by the Government decision to include within the ambit of the new Department all national parks, reserves, wildlife, wild and scenic rivers, historic places, protected inland waters, protected indigenous forests, forest parks and other multiple-use state forest areas not required for wood production. Specifically, as steward and protector of such lands, the Department will not be confronted with the problem that for so long beset the Forest Service in endeavouring to meet some conservation requirements while giving its main energies to the management of forests for timber production.

Some have seen this as 'locking up' natural lands, ignoring that such provision will ensure water and soil protection (with consequent downstream benefits), biological conservation, outdoors recreation and tourism, and most importantly, handing on to succeeding generations their

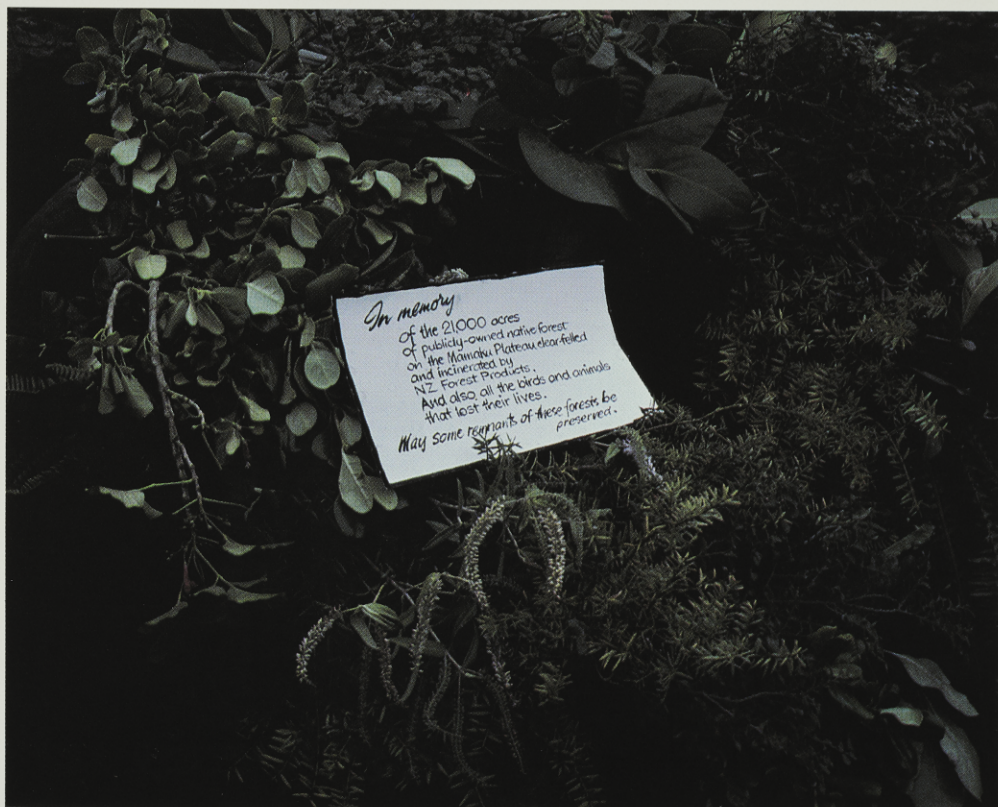
heritage of natural space and beauty for the growth of body, mind and spirit.

Between developers and conservationists there had long been energy wasted in conflict. The time has come now for a reconciliation of attitudes. The efficiency of commercial state operations should be able to proceed within clearly defined limits. Conservationists within Governments invariably saw top jobs go to development-oriented officers, but will now see their own careers open to promotion within the Department of Conservation.

It is appropriate to note that during the heat of controversy over past years conservationists have not always felt it politic to acknowledge progressive work that was done within the purview of the department of Lands and Survey, the aegis of the Forest Service and the Wildlife Service. It is timely to acknowledge such contributions to public education that have helped to redeem past errors and make possible a new understanding of land care.

Among the architects of the final victory substantial credit must go to Dr Michael Cullen who made sure that the idea of a nature conservancy became Labour Party policy; and Russell Marshall and Phillip Woollaston who set up the Environment Forum and the Working Party, and then travelled the country expounding principle and practice.

I can think of no other modern popular movement in New Zealand which has generated more enthusiasm and commitment to a great cause than has the cause of environmental protection over the past decade. It has been a rich experience to have shared in that great upwelling of democratic energy, determination and hope that brought together workers and students, men and women old and young, farmers, academics and unemployed. They talked incessantly, wrote thousands of submissions to endlessly proliferating committees, they took to the streets, lobbied



Will the new administration bury past exploitative attitudes? Logging wreath, Mamaku Plateau, Easter 1983.