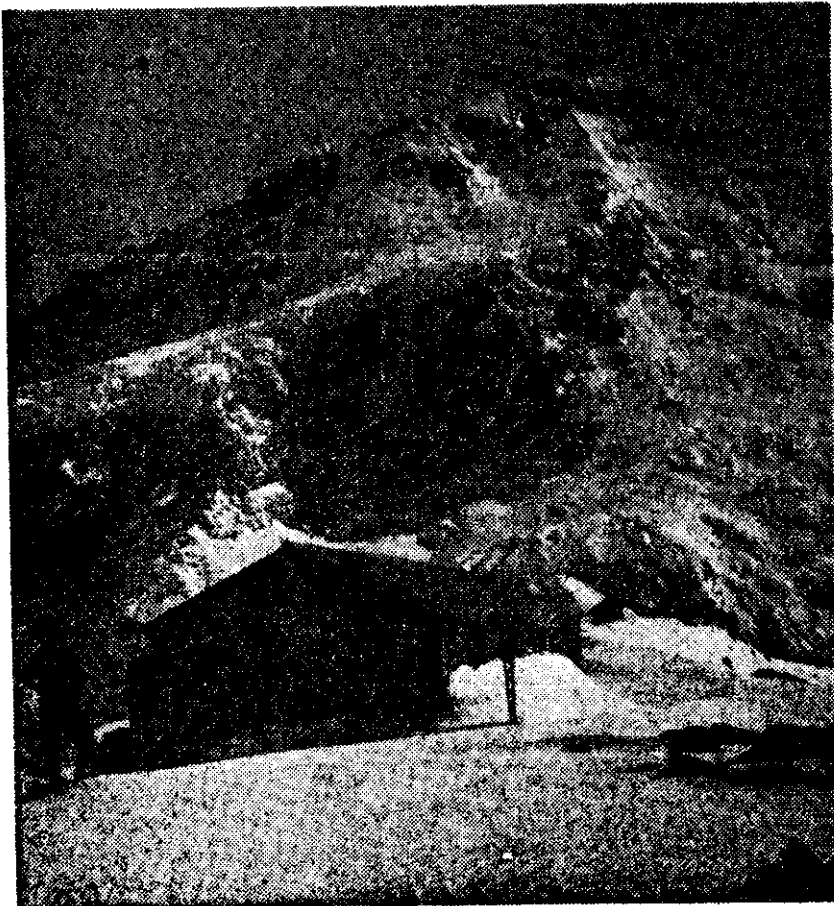
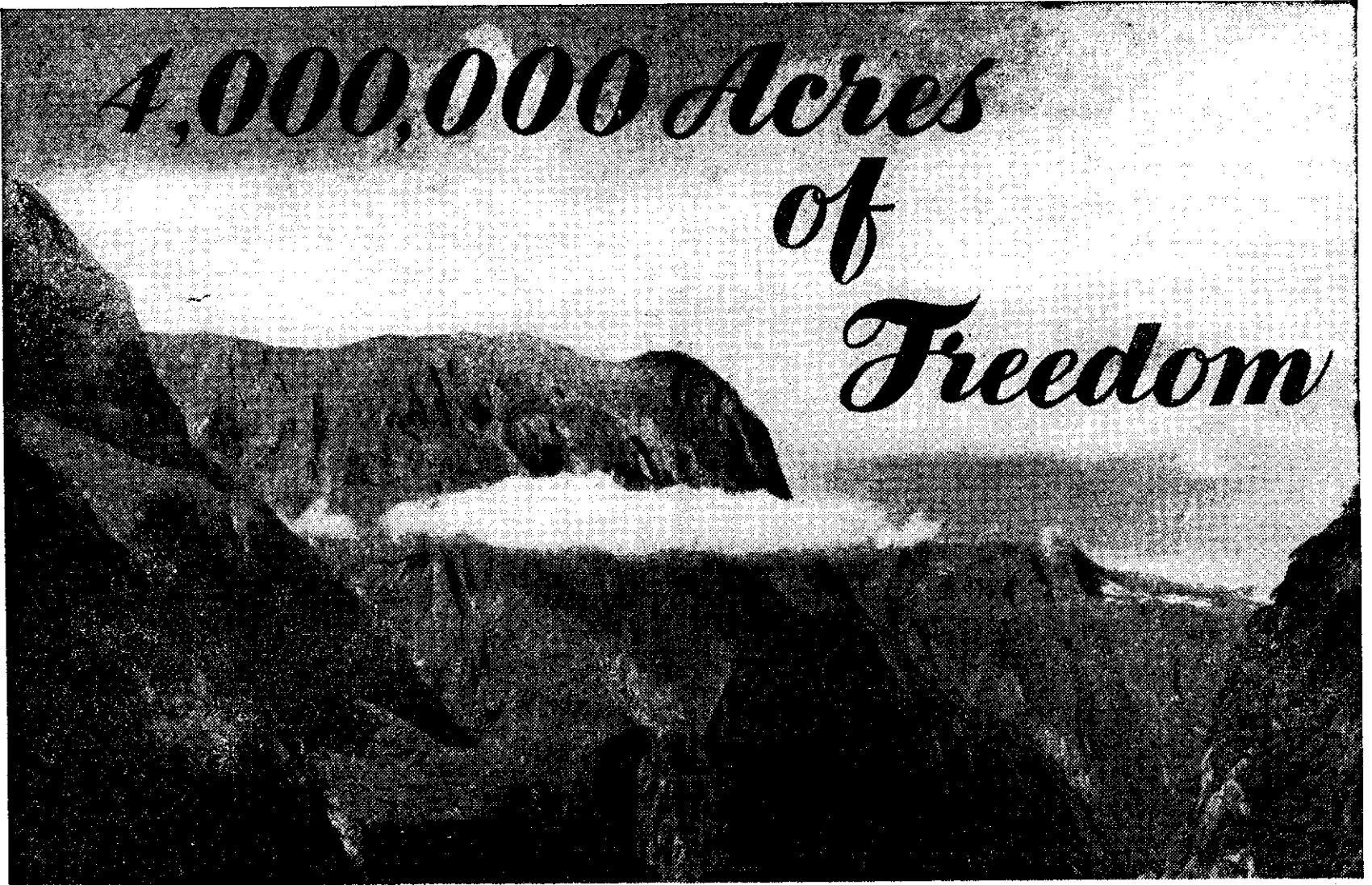


4,000,000 Acres of Freedom



FOUR score and seven years ago—more precisely, on the evening of September 19, 1870—a group of men from Helena, Montana, sat around a campfire in that region of the U.S. North-West known to the Indians as The Land of the Yellow Rocks. As the woodsmoke drifted upward they talked of the country they had travelled through in several weeks of exploration and speculated about its future. One suggested that they should contrive to gain control of the land and exploit it as a tourist attraction, but another—he was Judge Cornelius Hedges, and his name is worth remembering—disagreed. No one, he said, should own privately any part of the region; it should be a national park.

History does not number Judge Hedges among the orators, and the occasion, unlike Gettysburg, produced no deathless dedication—but, after its fashion, it too represented a new birth of freedom. Fired by the idealism of Judge Hedges, the party so marshalled public opinion that the U.S. Government was moved to adopt the scheme, and on March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Bill that set Yellowstone apart “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as the first National Park of the United States.

It is in large measure due to the example of the United States that New Zealanders today enjoy the three million acres of freedom which lie behind

the vast portal of Milford Sound—pictured at the top of this page—and nearly a million more in seven other national parks throughout the country: in all, about one-seventeenth of the total area of the two main islands. And it is fitting, therefore, that the pioneering work of Judge Hedges and other Americans should be remembered in a small handbook* soon to be published by the National Parks Authority of New Zealand.

Though the United States pioneered in the establishment of national parks the idea spread far and swiftly. It crossed the Pacific to New Zealand when the young colony was still in the throes of the pioneering phase, and the first of our national parks—still known simply as National Park to anyone who listens to the weather forecasts—had its genesis in 1887 when the tract of land comprising the summits of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu was presented to the Government by Te Heuheu Tukino, paramount chief of the Ngati Tuwharetoa.

Tongariro National Park was constituted by an Act of 1894, and from then until the turn of the century various other areas were preserved under various Acts. Though these were not specifically designated national parks the aim of the legislation tended to whole or partial conservation of what had come to be regarded as national assets. In the South Island, such places as the Tasman Glacier

(continued on next page)

LEFT: The new Mueller Hut, Mt. Sefton (Mt. Cook National Park)

*NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL PARKS, issued by the National Parks Authority of New Zealand; available from the Government Printing Office and all leading booksellers, price 3/6.

N.Z. LISTENER, JUNE 7, 1957.