EDITORIAL.

A FOREST POLICY FOR THE FUTURE.

We have now seen our third year of depression close somewhat more favourably than the previous one, giving ground for the hope that a definite improvement has commenced. Comparatively speaking forestry in New Zealand has on the whole, weathered the crisis fairly successfully. In spite of drastic curtailment of activities, retrenchment, and reduction, our forestry organisations have managed to keep their operations intact, and to maintain some at least of the essential services. Nor will it be denied that the stimulus of adverse conditions has brought about increased efficiency in certain lines of organisation.

But with a new era opening before us, it is timely to ask what are our aims and objectives in forestry. Our forest policy in the past has never been fully developed nor clearly enunciated, but we have followed, rather gropingly, one or two lines which seemed safe, while we waited for the future to develop itself. But conditions have changed so greatly in the past few years that it seems essential that a re-orientation of our position should be made. There can be no return to the conditions as we knew them prior to 1930, so we can no longer accept unquestioningly any of our previous lines of thought or of action. The ensuing decade will no doubt be the most critical in all our forest history. It might well be asked, and fully considered, what is our line of development to be. We are faced with a number of extremely vital questions, some of them new, the result of the stress of the past three years, and some of them much older, which we have in the past refused to face, postponing them indefinitely in the hope that they might somehow answer themselves. But all must now be faced. We can no longer avoid the issue, the situation is
too critical. If forestry in New Zealand is to go forward with any confidence or security as an essential component of our national life we must have a clearer visualisation of our objectives both in our own minds and in the general consciousness of the nation. The magnitude of the problem may be illustrated by citing some of the questions awaiting answer.

What are to be the relative parts played in our national development by the State, the local bodies and the private companies? Where ceases the responsibility of the State in ensuring adequate timber supplies, in view of the great development of private afforestation, all unforeseen ten years ago? What standard of care, attention and protection shall be applied to our new man-made forests, and having formed them and grown them, how now are we going to use them to best advantage? May it not yet be sound national economy to substitute sustained yield management for destructive exploitation of the native forests of the South Island? What is to be the ultimate destiny of the enormous area of Provisional State Forest and of the protection forest areas of New Zealand? What is to be the relation of forestry to river control, to game, and recreation? What of our attitude toward timber exports, to conservation for our own use, to importations? And finally, given a definite policy to pursue, can we not devise some adequate basis of organisation and finance for our national forestry service that it may work along planned lines free from political whims and changes, and from financial instability?

It is obvious that the elaboration of a definite forest policy for this country is a matter requiring very careful consideration from many points of view, so that it cannot be undertaken hastily, nor perfunctorily nor by any one interested party. There is provision in our Forests Act for an Advisory Board whose intended function is seemingly to assist in the drafting of a considered forest policy for the Dominion. The services of this Board have not yet been availed of. It is suggested, however, that the time has now come when action in this direction might well be made.