EDITORIAL

A letter has been received from the National Anti-Litter Campaign Council asking for the support of our society in their current campaign.

Litter is something of which we are all only too painfully aware. Its effects go far beyond its offence to our aesthetic values. Much litter, such as glass, broken rusty tins etc., can be dangerous either to the person, through cuts and infection, or to property as a result of fire that can so easily be caused by the sun striking a piece of glass at the right angle to start tinder dry leaves smouldering, or by a carelessly dropped match or cigarette butt.

I'm sure that every member of a society such as ours, which is dedicated to the preservation of natural beauty, deplores the far too common sight of a littered countryside. What exactly can the individual do about the problem? Probably the best long term solution is through education by personal example and sensible instruction. We can each set a good example in our own homes. How many of us, for instance, have, as the Campaign Council suggest, a waste basket and ashtrays in each room. The provision of facilities for the disposal of litter - plenty of bins where they are most likely to be needed in town or country - is of course essential. If we don't feel the local councils are providing adequate numbers of bins we should ask them for more.

Stiffer penalties are not, I think, the final answer. The present penalties would seem to be adequate. For dangerous litter the maximum penalty is one month's jail and/or $200 fine for an individual and $1000 fine for corporate bodies. For offensive litter, individuals a $100 fine, corporate bodies a $500 fine. For obstruction etc., a $200 fine. Litter prevention officers are every member of the police, every traffic officer, forest officer, ranger and harbourmaster as well as officials appointed by a public authority.

Let us hope that the Anti-Litter Campaign Council receives the support it needs and deserves in its drive against this public nuisance.

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Several members of our Society attended the meeting of the Forest and Bird Protection Society at Auckland University to hear the disturbingly interesting lecture on Conservation by Professor J.T. Salmon.

He began by pointing out that conservation really means making the wisest use of our natural resources and under this heading he mentioned preservation, forestry, erosion control, landscape architecture, chemical control and land utilization.

The urgent task in his view is to create public awareness of the importance of Ecology. The application of vigorous programmes of conservation was necessary if the earth was to remain habitable beyond another 50 years or so.

Slides were shown depicting the various natural cycles - the hydrologic, nitrogen and photosynthetic cycles - to show the inter-relation of plants, animals and water. These are the cycles that must be preserved and without which life would be impossible. Watershed areas have to be protected; a balance has to be made between cropped areas and areas protected by the natural cover of scrub; shelter must be provided to prevent erosion.

Slides showing well-balanced, correctly cropped land in Europe were compared with some showing the shocking erosion in parts of the South Island of New Zealand, which only took 20 years or so to effect but which will take much longer to repair. Apparently it is so bad that experts on erosion problems come here from all over the world to study it as one of the worst examples of this type of erosion.

The dangers of monoculture were mentioned, for example the build-up of pests and diseases which could occur, with possible disastrous results.

Road making in New Zealand was also criticized by Professor Salmon, particularly the practice of leaving verges and cuttings bare and therefore open to erosion. On new highways abroad the banks are usually sown down with grass immediately after completion and properly landscaped with trees and shrubs. The advantage of having trees lining highways was more than just the beauty of their being there. From a practical point of view they provide shade and shelter for motorists, picnickers etc. and protection against wind erosion of topsoil.

Pollution is one of the most pressing problems in the world today. The seas are rapidly becoming polluted and in 20 years time some parts will be uninhabitable. Even now it is considered unsafe to bathe in the Great Lakes in America. Professor Salmon also discussed the oil pollution caused by the Torrey Canyon disaster off the S.W. Coast of England and criticized the use of detergent to disperse the oil which, he claimed, would have been destroyed by natural processes in a few weeks. This detergent killed much of the marine life which would take at least 7 years to re-establish itself.

Professor Salmon wound up his lecture by pointing out that there was little organization in New Zealand regarding the conservation of our natural resources and compared it with the complex administrative organizations that exist in Britain and America. He then showed some slides of beauty spots and National Parks around the world.

Conservation is a subject that is concerning us all greatly at the present time and this excellent lecture helped to show the positive side of the subject, proving that conservationists are not necessarily the stick-in-the-mud fuddy-duddies that those who oppose them often try to make out.

A.D.P.

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BOOK REVIEW

NEW ZEALAND PLANTS AND THEIR STORY ---- LEONARD COCKAYNE.

Fourth Edition, edited by E.J.Godley.

Dr E.J.Godley, Director of the Botany Division of the D.S.I.R., has performed a very valuable service by producing a new edition of Cockayne's "New Zealand Plants and their Story", 48 years after the publication of the third edition and 41 years after the death of its author. Cockayne was a world leader in the subject of ecology, or the relation of plants to their environment; an accomplishment resulting from the fortunate combination of his natural ability, intense enthusiasm and a most appropriate country to work on. Probably the lack of a formal botanical training contributed rather than otherwise to his success, by saving him from getting bogged down in the laboratory details of taxonomy and leading him into the field where he excelled. And what an opportunity New Zealand provided him! Its extension in latitude, its varied topographical structure from plains to mountains and its climatic variations ranging from very wet to very dry, all in a small compass, make it a paradise for the field botanist.

The work "New Zealand Plants and their Story" was written primarily for the non-scientific reader, nevertheless it is packed with information and is fascinating reading for the amateur and professional botanist alike. It contains sufficient matter on the botanical exploration of New Zealand, on forms of plants and their classification, to provide an adequate frame for its main interest which is contained in successive chapters describing the vegetation of the coastal strip, the forests, scrub and heath, grasslands, high mountains, swamps and bogs and the outlying islands. A valuable chapter describes the changes made by human colonisation on the primitive plant cover and there is a discussion on the effects of glaciation and subsequent return to a temperate climate.

In the present edition, Dr. Godley has dealt gently with Cockayne's text, finding that in spite of the lapse of time, the author's original study was so thorough and accurate that little revision was wanted and apart from a short addition on weeds, questions of fact or interpretation arising from later botanical discovery are covered in a few footnotes. Editing has consisted mainly in bringing botanical names up to date, and in providing