

HANDCUFFED VOLUNTEERS

A HISTORY OF THE SCENERY
PRESERVATION BOARD IN TASMANIA 1915-1971.

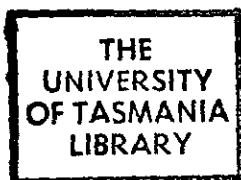
by

Gerard Castles B.A.

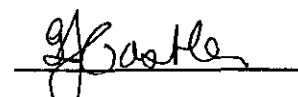
Submitted in Partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Bachelor of Arts with Honours.

University of Tasmania
1986.

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B.A. (Hons.)
1987



This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by another person where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.


Gerard Castles.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

I gratefully acknowledge the helpful advice and assistance of Professor Michael Roe in the preparation of this thesis.

Thanks must also be extended to the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the many people with whom I spoke during the year concerning the Scenery Preservation Board. Without their willing co-operation and assistance this task would have been impossible. Needless to say they are not responsible for the views expressed here.

And finally a grateful acknowledgment must be extended to Denis, Adrian, Angela, Shayne and Tom for their help in the getting together of the final draft.

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Not that even the truth was easy to discover: different eye witnessess give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or else from imperfect memories.

Thucydides:

Remarks on the Peloponnesian War.

Introduction:

On the 25th of October 1971, a small group of individuals gathered to formally effect the transfer of the Scenery Preservation Board's (S.P.B.) assets to the newly created National Parks and Wildlife Service. It was not a particularly grandiose affair, the press did not even bother to cover it, but by 4.30 that Monday afternoon the Board had slipped quietly from active service, into the annals of Tasmanian history.

Its history has been largely ignored by those who would rather concentrate on the 'big issues' of conservation; the flooding of Lake Pedder, the controversy over the woodchip industry and the Franklin River debate. However, these are merely the most recent manifestations of a conflict of ideas, perceptions and beliefs concerning the environment and its utilization which transcends barriers between nations and has been in existence for centuries. The history of the Scenery Preservation Board provides a document of that conflict in Tasmania since the beginning of the century.

The origins of the S.P.B. are found in a coalescence of interests around the turn of the century. Tasmania's small but enthusiastic community of field naturalists and other amateur scientists wedded their interests to those

seeking more recreational areas for Tasmanians and tourists alike. Their push for more effective management and control of the states reserves led to the Scenery Preservation Act of 1915 and in turn to the constitution of the Board.¹ The Board was made up of representatives of various Government departments and individuals nominated by the Governor in Council, it was responsible for the recommendation of areas for reservation and their subsequent control and management. Geoff Mosley, one of the few authors to examine the Board's history in any detail, has noted that from these earliest days the fortunes of the Board were closely tied to the State's tourist industry. His analysis while useful, remains superficial, failing to consider the complex forces acting upon the Board and its activities.

The only criteria the Board applied when assessing a potential reserve were amorphous reference to scenic or historic importance. If, in the Board's opinion these conditions were met the proposed reserve would be submitted to Government Departments such as Mines, Forestry and later the Hydro Electric Commission (H.E.C.) for approval. If any objections were raised then the idea was scrapped. The hierarchy of priorities was clear and as a result reserves were proclaimed either because they were wasteland, or they had tourist potential. The system was haphazard but by 1971 over 1000000 acres of the state had been reserved and therefore had come under the Board's control either

directly, or indirectly through one of a number of subsidiary Boards.

In 1915 the Government of the day had made lands reserved under the Scenery Preservation Act inalienable. In 1921 and again in 1938 amendments to the Act were passed which allowed for the revocation of reserved lands, and the right for the Board to grant timber, grazing or mining leases in reserves. By 1938 therefore, the system was extremely flexible. Even if an area was reserved but later recognized to have potential economically outweighing its aesthetic, scientific or historic worth, then simple revocation could take place or an appropriate lease be granted.

Terms such as conservationist or environmentalist, may be used interchangeably to describe the philosophy of movements which emerged during the 1960's in Tasmania and elsewhere. However, those groups and individuals whose efforts initiated the reserve system in Tasmania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while philosophically related, must be recognized as essentially different.

The Greek prefix proto means primitive or first, and when affixed to conservationist adequately conveys the distinction between the nature lovers and amateur scientists

of the early twentieth century and their latter day heirs. The proto-conservationists channeled their empathy with nature into a desire to preserve examples of native flora and fauna in perpetuity. Their numbers were small, usually urban and middle class in background but they represented the foundation of the modern conservation movement which has emerged since the 1960's with its attendant mobilization of mass support and political activism. The transition from proto-conservation to the modern variety is not delineated by any particular watershed in Tasmanian history but came with a realization of the inherent weakness of the proto-conservationists in the face of the competing values and bureaucratic power of the developmentalists. The value differences between these modalities shall be analysed in due course.

Around the turn of the century the idea germinated, among groups such as the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club, the Royal Society of Tasmania and the Royal Ornithological Union, that areas should be preserved in their primeaval state for posterity chiefly for their scientific interest. These individuals were joined in the demand for reserves by those who sought to escape from the trammels of urban life into the relative solitude of the Tasmanian bush. They were found in organizations such as the Southern Tasmanian Railway Exploration League, the Australian Natives Association and a variety of tourist and progress

associations. In an era before the proliferation of cheap mass entertainment, these groups provided an important recreational outlet for urban middle class dwellers. While the scientific interest of reserves was not lost on these nature lovers quiet walks, motorized or rail day trips to scenic places and picnics were more their fortê; simple recreation their goal.

The interest groups and government bodies involved in the Tasmanian reserves were generally content with the system as it evolved during the first half of the twentieth century. Conflict did not spontaneously arise, but, over a period of years, it was realized that the government was basing its decisions concerning utilization of the Tasmanian environment on criteria different from, and largely irreconcilable with, those advocated by the preservationists and recreationalists.

From these beginnings the contemporary conservation movement has evolved. Phillip Shackel traced its development chiefly through the response of interest groups, particularly walking clubs, to a series of environmental crises during the twentieth century.³ His analysis, while useful is somewhat simplistic: its idealism is a result of the period in which it was written, that is during the debate over the flooding of Lake Pedder. Shackel, obsessed with the 'bushwalker/conservationist', failed to adequately

comprehend the conflict of values which was an essential aspect of his study. Characterization of those not necessarily 'bushwalker/conservationists' as 'anti-conservationist' is far too simplistic as a form of historical analysis. As Richard Flanagan has pointed out, in political terms the change has alienated potential support from the conservation movement, thus seriously jeopardizing its chances of long term success.⁴

J.M. Powell, like Flanagan, is pessimistic about the future of the conservation movement. In examining the evolution of environmental management policies prior to 1914, Powell contrasts the clash of interests between land developers taming a hostile environment, and painters and poets who were enchanted by the land and its vicissitudes. Powell characterizes Australian society as being hostile to a conservationist cause, with its emphasis upon the aesthetic value of the environment. Instead, society is orientated towards exploitative, expansionist activities. Anti-intellectualism has played a role in this: the purist conservationists, often scornfully classed as intellectuals, have had to yield to a broad utilitarian conservation epitomised by Government Departments such as the Forestry Commission and the H.E.C., far more potent and readily advocated particularly in the early years of this century.⁵

While it is difficult to quantify the effect of an attitude such as anti-intellectualism in society, Powell's argument does have relevance to the Tasmanian situation beyond his finishing point of 1914. Because the community pressure upon government concerning park and reserve management came from a relatively small group of urban, often middle class individuals, whose arguments ultimately rested upon assessing the worth of reserved lands in aesthetic, scientific or moral terms, they were easily dismissed by governments and a populace primarily interested in economic realities.

Bruce Davis has offered an explanation of the conservationist-development conflict which provides an interpretative framework for analysis of the S.P.B.⁶ While concentrating upon the post 1960 conservation movement, his thoughts have relevance beyond that year.

Davis has shown that a society's perception of what constitutes a resource is an essential ingredient in the conservation argument. As the primary source of wealth and power in society, resources are the cause for intense competition. However, the worth of a resource is not fixed spatially or temporally, resources are basically cultural concepts in that perceptions of what constitutes a resource shall change as society changes. The question of the worth of reserves as aesthetic, scientific, recreational or

historical resources as opposed to their worth in economic terms for forestry, hydro or mineral development was a recurring theme in conflicts involving the Scenery Preservation Board. The difficulty of arguing that an area is of more interest culturally than it would be economically has been a root cause of the weakness of the conservation movement on issues where opposition was met from development interests. It explains why, from the turn of the century the preservationists and also latter day conservationists, have found it necessary to bolster what they perceive to be the cultural importance of a park or reserve with economic arguments such as tourist potential.

The movement which has emerged in opposition to development interests has defied accurate definition. Davis has shown that the movement itself does not have a well substantiated or as yet coherently argued ideology. Groups such as The Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM) and The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), the Department of Arts Heritage and the Environment, and a plethora of environmental organizations are all reaching towards definitions of conservation. Environmentalism emerges as a particular set of beliefs about the relationship between the individual and nature. Generally antipathetic to existing modes of technology and natural

resources utilization, it is a loose amalgam of differing philosophies and values.

Environmentalism has been beset by contradiction and Davis acknowledges O'Riordan as the author who has most successfully dealt with this problem. O'Riordan has identified two divergent philosophies which emerged when the conservation movement was born from which the philosophies which shape modern conservation and development have grown. O'Riordan refers to these philosophies as ecocentrism and technocentrism.⁷

Ecocentrism involved an attitude towards the environment of humility and reverence, revealing a deep concern for the relationships between 'man and nature'. It has influenced the modern conservation movement by positing a natural morality which governs a society's relationship with the environment and thus implying limits to the compass, if not always the direction, of progress, implying the necessity for preserving unique environments. It also raises questions about the nature of democracy, distribution of wealth and power in society and the reconciliation of opposing convictions. Clearly, what O'Riordan has identified as ecocentrism provides many of the ideas which emerge in the modern conservation movement.

Technocentrism derived from the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution assumption that scientific knowledge, the application of specialist skills, logical evaluation and the division of labour would lead towards greater material welfare and a more egalitarian society. O'Riordan's comment that, "Man's conscious actions are anthropocentric by definition," holds the key to understanding the nature of the conservation - development conflict. The differences between an ecocentric and a technocentric mode are found in the values which are brought to bear upon an individuals or groups actions. In comparison to the econcentric mode, the technocentric is identified by rationality, managerial efficiency, and optimism and faith in the ability of society to understand and control physical, social and biological processes, in the present and in the future. The question of values is of central importance to this argument. Davis provides a definition of 'values' which may be applied throughout this study. Values may be taken as those inner beliefs and attitudes which govern society, and reactions to situations, hence ultimately conditioning actions.⁹ Thus, it is more accurate to refer to a continuum of values on which the range of proto, semi and quasi conservationists, and developmentalists can be identified, and classified. However, when a fundamentally divisive issue such as the flooding of Lake Pedder arises, those at the poles appeal to core sets of values, whether they be conservationist or developmentalist, to attract support and attain their goals.

As a result, a body such as the S.P.B., which reflects an uneasy coalition of competing core values, is naturally pulled apart or dangerously compromised by its decision one way or the other. In these situations apparent contradictions arise which the pro-conservationist / anti-conservationist frame of analysis cannot explain.

O'Riordan's analysis of ecocentrism and technocentrism serves to delineate the value differences between 'conservation' and development as competing philosophies. However, Davis offers a qualification of O'Riordan's argument. In reality the differences between the two modes of thought are not always clear. Individuals and groups may borrow from either mode depending upon changed circumstances. As a result, those termed developmentalists, whether they be administrators, planners, engineers or otherwise are not always insensitive to the beauties of Nature but their professional backgrounds, education and values channel their perceptions in a particular direction.¹⁰

The point is substantiated by reference to the career of Sir Allan Knight.¹¹ Graduating as an engineer, Sir Allan worked originally for the Public Works Department and then became Commissioner for the H.E.C. During the Lake Pedder controversy Sir Allan was commonly recognized as the arch-enemy of the conservation movement through his

persistent belief that Lake Pedder had to be inundated as part of an H.E.C. scheme. Yet during his career he played a significant role in the Scenery Preservation Board, being instrumental in the declaration of roadside reserves on the West Coast Highways. Between 1946 and 1950 he had opposed the A.N.M. attempt to alienate land from Mt. Field National Park, which was being pushed in the interests of development by the Cosgrove Government at that time. 'Anti-Conservationist' does not adequately describe such an individual; the values shaping his perceptions are more complex than such a term would imply.

Flanagan also found contradictions in the accepted dichotomy between conservation and development at the other end of the social scale. In his examination of West Coast piners in particular, Flanagan found empathy between man and nature which those who perceived them as shamelessly exploiting the environment could not explain.¹²

Yet despite these apparent contradictions a development ethos can be identified. Robson has argued convincingly that in Tasmania this ethos has developed peculiarities unique to the State.¹³ Central to Robson's thought on this issue is his belief that Tasmanian history has been shaped by its colonial past. Colonies by definition exist so as to be exploited by the metropolitan authority and Tasmania provided no exception in this case.

It became essential that the island's resources be developed for economic gain. Robson indicates that the development ethos resulted in the establishment and encouragement of large scale secondary industry, particularly after the turn of the century. Hydro electricity was to play a key role in this process with the Government outlaying £ 2000000 in 1919 for hydro development, in a display of confidence it would reassert constantly in the future. The building of dams in the central highlands increased the amount of power available to secondary industry, among the beneficiaries were the Electrolytic Zinc Company and Cadbury Brothers confectionary factory. In the north of the State Kelsall and Kemp's woollen works, along with Paton Baldwin's spinning mills were established.

The Depression deeply affected the Tasmanian economy as it did the rest of Australia. A.G. Ogilvie, the Tasmanian Premier responded by stressing the need for the state to be further 'developed' with the onus being placed upon labour intensive secondary industries. The need for cheap power to lure industry to Tasmania was recognized by Ogilvie and the interests of the H.E.C. were increasingly perceived as being vital to the economic well being of the State. Cheap power and generous timber concessions leading to the establishment of Australian Newsprint Mills (A.N.M.) at Boyer near Hobart in the 1930's and in 1955 the Bell Bay Aluminium plant was established, cheap power again proving a

decisive factor.

In Tasmania, technocentrism became the core set of values of what may be termed the development ethos. The fervour with which this ethos has been accepted and pursued in Tasmania owes much to the State's origins as a colony, but other factors may be cited as well. Since the nineteenth century Tasmanians had perceived themselves as being at a disadvantage to the other Australian colonies because of size and geographical insularity. Wary of federation as an idea, the reality did little to lessen Tasmania's paranoia and the sense of disadvantage was perpetuated. Population growth added to this belief, Tasmania often experienced a net loss of population as the birth rate failed to keep pace with emigration to the mainland states. The foundations were being laid for a fierce defensive pride in the State based upon the fear that Tasmania did not fare well in comparison to the larger States. It was to provide the motive force behind the development ethos and the concomitant over-emphasis upon the achievements of the H.E.C. and industrialization and through this Tasmanian governments hoped to achieve economic parity with other States. The development ethos was woven into all levels of society and accepted as a statement of fact and of economic survival.

The S.P.B became entangled in this ethos, its history

providing a unique document of the conflict between the values of conservation and those of development. To study such a document is to court obvious dangers. Emotions still run high over the environmental debates of the last forty years and while extensively using oral sources, this fact must be remembered. However, the danger inherent in separating fact from emotion in the recent past are far outweighed by the relevance of contemporary history, for in the history of the recent past lies tomorrows decisions. To those who ply their art in the dusty shelves of the distant past such a view would be anathema, but if it proves to be a crossing of the river Styx it is at least done knowingly.

Endnotes: Introduction.

1. Scenery Preservation Act, 6 Geo. V. No.15.
2. Mosley, G.J. "Aspects of the Geography of recreation in Tasmania.", PHD Thesis, ANU, 1983, p218.
3. Shackel, P.J. "Conservation: A Study in the Growth of Public Interest", Honours These, Hobart, 1968, Introduction.
4. Flanagan, R. A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country, Greenhouse Publications Ltd, Richmond, Victoria, 1985. pp 92-93.
5. Cited in Davis, B.W. "Characteristics and Influences of the Australian Conservation Movement: An Examination of Selected Controversies", Unpublished PHD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1981, pl7.
6. Ibid. Chapters 2-3.
7. O'Riordan, T. Environmentalism, Pion Ltd, London, 1976, pp 1-19.
8. Ibid. pl1.
9. Davis, B.W. op cit., pl84.
10. Ibid., p32.
11. Interview with the author, 23/10/1986.
12. Flanagan, R. op cit.
13. Robson, L. A Short History of Tasmania, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985.

Chapter One: Creation of the Board.

From the first beach-heads established around the coast of Tasmania, the uncharted and unknown hinterland was explored. It was hardly an organized or well orchestrated process, but the result of an amalgam of private and Government initiative. Settlers aided by their convict labourers searched for land which could be cultivated or grazed, while others succumbed to the lure of gold, tin and silver, seeking wealth beyond their wildest dreams. Pine and timber cutters probed the deep river valleys searching out stands of Tasmanian Oak, Huon Pine, King Billy or Blackwood. The exploration of Tasmania owes a vast debt to these individuals. Yet, in their wake, they left behind little with which the historian can piece together their perceptions of the land they pioneered. Deserted mine shafts, moss covered stumps deep in the bush, rusted boilers on the side of overgrown creeks, broken down buildings long since disused and vague memories passed down through generations are all that remain. It has been enough for some to suggest that the early pioneers were exploiters, and rape of the environment a necessity of the pioneering life.¹ This view has been recently challenged. The pioneers, in particular the early piners and prospectors of the West Coast, have been shown to have held an attitude towards the environment in which they lived, not altogether dissimilar from that of modern day conservationists.²

However, by their very nature, these individuals were loners, reticent at best and more often silent; it would remain for others to tell their story.

The efforts of the settlers, piners and prospectors were built upon by individuals working for the early Lands and Survey Departments, and organisations such as the Van Diemen's Land Company. These men were the surveyors and explorers who were part of a more systematic attempt to gain accurate knowledge of the uncharted regions of the island colony. Binks has shown, through his analysis of the exploring tradition in Western Tasmania, that these men faced an immense task. The conditions were such that no single individual could explore the whole region. Over a period of decades the boundaries of the unknown were rolled back until European man had at least a working knowledge of the island's geography.³

These individuals are important because they communicated their knowledge of, and reaction to, the land which they mapped and explored. Hellyer, Wedge, Sharland, Calder, Sprent, Scott and T.B. Moore are among the early explorers and surveyors whose places in the pantheon of Tasmanian history are secured largely because of the immediate relevance their exploits had for society, and the mass of information they left later generations.

When T.B. Moore stood atop Frenchman's Cap in 1887 his ecstatic description on the panorama which greeted him was duly reported in the Mercury, its readers visualising the scene lying before Moore.

Mountain ranges taking numberless forms and irregular shapes of rugged loveliness rise up from the valleys, and tower above one another ... A lover of nature would gaze upon this scene and exclaim with Tom Moore, "If there be an Elysium on earth it is this."⁴

Flanagan has shown that the early explorer's attempts, to capture in words experiences which the Tasmanian environment had burned into their consciousness, vacillated between fear, awe, wonder and at times extravagant praise.⁵ It was not the first time such responses had been evoked, but among the writings of the explorers and surveyors one finds the first significant attempts to articulate the emotional impact of the environment upon the individual. Their experience, unlike those of the pioneering settlers, prospectors and piners, affected individuals who would never set foot upon the peaks or button grass plains of Western Tasmania, but whose lives would be lived within the environs of urban centres. These people, the urban dwellers, read of the exploits of the explorers and surveyors and caught glimpses of the natural wonder of Tasmania at lantern slide evenings conducted by photographers, themselves pioneers in their field, such as James Watt Beattie.

They began to ponder the relationship between the individual and nature. It was among the urban middle classes that one finds individuals who had the time, the inclination and the resources for such abstract exercises, and it was inevitable that they should form the backbone of the preservationist movement. Those whose livelihood depended directly upon utilization of Tasmania's minerals and forestry wealth were not consciously precluded from such a movement, but their support was not actively canvassed and consequently not offered. As a result the preservation of the environment was not the concern of a majority of the population.

The first to identify areas of scenic importance were the Government surveyors, whose observations led to the reservation of certain areas under the Crown Lands Acts for scenic purposes. From the middle of the nineteenth century the Royal Society of Tasmania began to lobby, in large part unsuccessfully, for flora and fauna reserves. By the end of the century a number of reserves had been proclaimed. In 1889 the Government prepared a list of over one hundred reserves under its control including show grounds, sports grounds and race courses. Among their number were scattered reserves of 'other like purposes' which included playgrounds, scenery reserves, cave reserves, fernery reserves and falls reserves.⁶ These reserves were to

fulfill a dual purpose. For the citizens of the towns, day trips to areas such as the Russell Falls or Mt. Wellington Springs in the South, and Ben Lomond or Mt. Barrow in the North provided important recreational activity which was widely recognized as being of spiritual value as well. In 1915 this attitude had not changed, the Mercury describing the Russell Falls areas as,

a place where those who love Nature in her own free beauty may find her and spend many glad hours in her company, and not without being spiritually uplifted thereby.⁷

The reserves and the facilities which grew up around them were also designed to cater for the interests and needs of growing numbers of tourists. Mosley has shown, that prior to World War One, Tasmanian tourist traffic increased steadily. As early as the 1890's this had led to the formation of voluntary organizations which promoted and organized the islands tourist attractions. In 1893 the Hobart based Tasmanian Improvement and Tourist Association was created and attempted to protect and develop beauty spots while making them more accessible to tourists. Similar organizations existed in the north and west of the State contributing to the development of tracks through reserves and accommodation facilities.⁸

By 1911 Tasmania's scenic beauty had been recognized as an important resource in itself, the protection of which

was essential to the continued growth of the tourist industry. Tourism came under Government control when the financially embarrassed Southern Tasmanian Tourist Association was superceded in 1914 by the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, itself subject to the Railways Department. In Government circles, an obvious relationship existed between tourism and scenery preservation, an attitude essentially valid but not entirely consistent with the ideas being expressed by those who were to initiate the call for a more effective control and management of Tasmania's reserves. However, in the movement to establish a National Park in the Russell Falls area, these interests were to coalesce, the combined force of which was to result in the Scenery Preservation Act of 1915.

The merging of these interests was consciously sought by the proto-conservationists from the turn of the century as a short term measure to allow the achievement of their long term goal of preservation of the native flora and fauna. Organizations such as the Royal Society and the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club had been successful in having flora and fauna reserves proclaimed only to see the fauna, in particular, severely depleted through lack of effective management and protection. Such was the case on the Freycinet Peninsula reserve.⁹ Conflict had also arisen over use of Mt. Wellington as a recreational area. In 1904 the Hobart City Council acted to restrict access to the

Mountain because of fear that visitor use was damaging Hobart's water catchment area. This was seen to be detrimental to tourism, drives to the Springs and subsequent walks proving popular with mainland visitors. Controversy also arose over the Gordon River Scenic Reserve, it being rumoured that logging interests had been granted a sawmilling lease in the area. The Government replied in 1911, stating that no sawmilling lease had been granted on the Gordon, but further west along Macquarie Harbour.¹⁰ A problem obviously existed. Governments were prepared to declare reserves but the lack of any supporting management infrastructure meant the reserve system in Tasmania was in need of urgent reform.

The efforts of Tasmania's proto-conservationists must not be seen in isolation. Other States in Australia were facing similar problems and internationally, New Zealand and the United States provided examples for the Tasmanians. The U.S.A. in particular provided an important source of inspiration. The foundation of Yellowstone National Park provided an example immediately taken up in Australia. Indeed the common philosophical basis on which the national parks movements in the U.S.A. and Australia were built is worthy of some discussion.

Vitalism had emerged in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century in the thought of Nietzsche, Bergson and

James, sweeping all before it in its assertion of the individual's creative power.¹¹ The shock waves of this movement were felt around the world. American progressivism, epitomized by Theodore Roosevelt's administration, encapsulated much of the vitalist creed in its reform programme, a basic tenet of which was nature preservation. The Australians were quick to seize upon the American example adapting progressivism to the Australian situation. The progressives were characterized by strength and vigour in their private lives, holding an almost unbounded optimism in their ability to shape the destiny of society, ultimately for good. Nature lovers in the extreme, the progressives tirelessly studied and catalogued indigenous flora and fauna believing that, in Nature, one may find the very source of vitality, joy and freedom. The values and aspirations espoused by the progressives were undoubtedly those of the urban middle class. It was from individuals and groups suffused with this spirit that the national park movement in Tasmania emerged, with individuals such as E.T. Emmett, Leonard Rodway, Clive Lord and William Crooke.

The national park idea had been discussed in Tasmania as early as 1893 with the Freycinet-Schouten Island area being mooted as a possibility. In other stages, Mt. Wellington and the Ben Lomond plateau were mooted as potential parks.¹² While the Government was prepared to

reserve these areas, the cost involved in the establishment of a national park system proved prohibitive.

After the formation in 1904 of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club and the Royal Ornithological Union, the proto-conservationists were prepared in the short term to ally their cause with that of tourism.¹³ It was obvious that the concept of a national park would only become a reality if the Government of the day could see an economic return from the necessary investment. With this belief in mind, attention was drawn towards the Russell Falls area near Mt. Field.

The area had originally been proclaimed a reserve in 1885¹⁴ and had proved popular with Tasmanians and mainland visitors, being, as it was, within easy reach of Hobart. However, the 300 acres originally reserved proved only a beginning. After years of camping and walking in the area, Leonard Rodway, the Government Botanist, with Herbert Nichols, a prominent Hobart judge and politician, are said to have triggered the idea of extending the Russell Falls Reserve to include the high country around Mt. Field plateau.¹⁵ However, the driving force behind the movement, which would ultimately see the establishment of a national park in the area was undoubtedly William Crooke. Crooke himself provides something of an enigma. Little is known of his life other than his association with the national park

movement, and yet he was clearly a prominent figure in Tasmanian society at this time, worthy of further attention.

In 1913 concern mounted that timber cutting around Russell Falls and the extension of the Derwent Valley railway to Tyenna would endanger the Falls Reserve. Interest was sparked as far afield as Melbourne; W.H. Davies imploring the Government to protect the virginal beauty of the Russell Falls from the constant traffic of visitor and vandalism.¹⁶ In October, the Minister for Lands, E. Mulcahy, received a deputation, organized by Crooke but led by Sir Elliot Lewis, himself a former Liberal Premier, which argued for the establishment of a national park in the Russell Falls area. The deputation stated, that in reserving an area for a national park, an important sanctuary for flora and fauna could be created which would be of interest to visitor and Tasmanian alike. The Mt. Field plateau, which would be included in the proposed park, was 'valueless' and thus could easily be reserved. However, it was recognized that the land surrounding Russell Falls itself provided a different problem. Its potential for other uses would be lost by extension of the present reserve, "...but the question was whether it was not of more value if reserved as a National Park." The question of

relative value was one which the Minister understood well. As he pointed out in an extraordinarily prophetic statement,

... reservations of timber were not always made in the interests of preservation of forest scenery. Sometimes it did not pay to preserve the finest forest in the world as a scenic asset.¹⁷

In the meeting between Lewis' deputation and the Minister, one finds an attempt to explore the worth of the environment in other than economic terms. The issue was to prove central in this case and would be restated constantly through the years. However, if the proto-conservationists were to gain more than sympathy from the Government, their arguments would have to rely upon more than stating the scientific, aesthetic or recreational interest of national parks.

Late in October, a revised plan was submitted to Mulcahy proposing a national park of some 22,000 acres. In this submission, the tourist potential of the proposed park was emphasized. It was expected that with the extension of the Derwent Valley railway line to Tyenna and the development of the Mt. Field Russell Falls areas as a national park, the tourist traffic would significantly increase.¹⁸ The argument proved forceful enough for the Government to accept the national park concept, setting aside £500 for preliminary work, and promising to increase

the reserve to 5,000 acres. However, the addition to the existing reserve did not satisfy Crooke. In March 1914, at his instigation, a National Park Committee was formed including representatives of the City of Hobart Corporation, the University, the New Town Municipality, the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club, the Australian Natives Association, the Forest League, the Fisheries Commission and the Southern Tasmanian Railway Exploration League. The Committee was to fight for a National Park of 22,000 acres, managed by an appointed Committee and protected by legislation.¹⁹

The fall of the Solomon Government and the accession of Labor in April 1914 brought renewed pressure from the National Park Committee. The Labor government proved considerably more amenable than their Liberal predecessors, the new Minister for Lands, James Belton, agreeing to extend the reserve to 25,000 acres.²⁰ By 1915, 27,000 acres had been reserved in the Russell Falls-Mt. Field area, exceeding even the hopes of the National Park Committee. However, the Government held the proclamation of the new National Park in abeyance until more general legislation concerning scenery preservation could be enacted.²¹

The Mercury recognized that more than love of nature had prompted the Government action on this issue, stating that the "business asset" value of the park, that is the lucre to be gained from tourists, had been a deciding

factor. However, like the proto-conservationists, the Mercury believed the real worth of the park lay elsewhere with,

healthy educative holidays, days amongst the crowded solitudes that appeal to the finer natures, <and> opportunities for communing with the spirit of the trees and the brooks ...²²

Fine sentiments indeed, but the Mercury was relating an ideal to which the Government, of either political persuasion was only prepared to pay lip service.

Under John Earle's Labor Government, the necessary legislation was guided through the Parliament with barely a ripple of interest, scenery preservation being of secondary importance to prosecution of the war effort and the Act was proclaimed on the 26th November 1915.²³ The Tasmanians had few precedents to follow in this field, however the experience of New Zealand was an important factor in shaping the Act, that country having passed similar legislation earlier in the century. Under the terms of the Act the S.P.B. was created consisting of the Surveyor General, who automatically became Chairman, the Commissioner of Railways, the Engineer in Chief, a representative of the State Tourism Department, and three gentlemen who were enthusiasts in the cause of scenery preservation.²⁴ The Board was to be in all things subject to the Minister. Under the Act the Board's

principal function was to recommend the permanent reservation of lands of scientific or historic interest and to administer the lands so reserved. However, where deemed fit, the Board could vest control of a reserve in a municipal council or specially constituted authority which would be subject to the Board's conditions.²⁵ This led to the establishment of subsidiary Boards which were responsible for areas such as Cradle Mountain and Freycinet Peninsula. These Boards had some autonomy, but the S.P.B. remained the parent body. Land reserved under the Act was inalienable, the only exception being where, in the Governor's opinion and with the consent of Parliament, land could be revoked because it was no longer suitable for scenic purposes through damage or destruction. It is important to note that the Board was never responsible for fauna protection, its emphasis instead being on the preservation of scenery and flora. It was not until 1928 that separate consideration was given to fauna protection, when the Animal and Birds Protection Act was passed, and a separate Board appointed to administer its provisions.²⁶

In real terms, the Board was simply regarded as part of the Lands and Surveys Department. The Surveyor General was automatically Chairman of the Board, and its finance was obtained as part of the Lands Department vote. Furthermore, the Board was physically housed inside the Lands Department until the late 1960's.

From the outset the Board, though responsible for a huge area of the state, was starved of funds. For example, by 1922 the Board had reserved over 223,000 acres and yet its budget for the financial year ending 30th June 1922 was only. £ 278. In comparison, this was a relatively good year for the Board, in 1925-26 the budget was only. £ 29.

The subsidiary Boards received a separate allocation but this was also meagre. Some subsidiary Boards were able to generate additional revenue by charging admission to reserves or by sale of timber. However, this rarely covered costs, voluntary labour and donations of materials being often the only means by which facilities could be provided and maintained.

The S.P.B functioned for most of its life with very few staff. Initially its requirements were met by a part time secretary who was paid a small honorarium. To implement policy or carry out even the most mundane task, the Board was forced to rely upon the staff of its members' Departments, or other volunteers. The Board's status was clearly indicated by the amount that successive Governments were prepared to invest in its activities and

the conclusion is unavoidable that the Board and its work was little more than a governmental backwater.

Ostensibly, the proto-conservationists had won their battle with the proclamation of the Scenery Preservation Act, the founding of the Board and the promise of a National Park near Mt. Field. However, in important respects, it represented a Pyrrhic victory. The cause of scenery preservation was not taken up by anything approaching a mass movement. Instead it was fought for by a small but dedicated group of idealists; men such as Dobson, Rodway, Emmett, Crooke and Lord visualized and attained a National Park, and the Scenery Preservation Act. In future years, the narrow social base of the evolving conservation movement proved to be a drawback in dealing with Governments which, by virtue of their nature, must count votes when deciding policy. To the majority of the population, the preservation of scenery remained of ephemeral importance, an attitude which was to remain unchanged until the 1960's.

The proto-conservationists succeeded in their cause largely through compromise. Their argument had been based upon a statement of the aesthetic and scientific worth of reserves, recreation and tourism were not ignored but nevertheless remained subservient to these higher ideals. For the Government and the mass of the public, these priorities were reversed. The proto-conservationists were

not blind to their situation, as was to be shown by their statements at the opening of the National Park, but they were to believe that their values, and those of the Government and the rest of the population, could be accommodated in the system the Board was to administer.

The naivety of such a belief would be revealed during the first thirty years of the Board's existence.

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Chapter Two: The Early Years 1915 - 1945.

With all its flaws the Scenery Preservation Act of 1915 provided Tasmania with the most progressive legislation of its type in Australia.¹ When the Board finally met for the first time in June 1916, their optimism was understandable. The Chairman, E.A. Counsel, asked the Board to recommend areas for reservation and an instruction was issued to the Government surveyors,

to take special note of waterfalls, forest clad mountain gorges, conspicuous rocky outcrops, attractive and commanding viewpoints or other places of historical or scenic interest and natural beauty.²

It was as close as the Board would come to defining the type of area it wished to set aside, and it proved sufficient for the Board to have reserved over 200,000 acres of the State by 1922, a remarkable effort for a part time Board of bureaucrats and nature enthusiasts. Mosely has attributed the Board's success during these early years to the support it received from Government quarters. The work of the Board was seen as protecting the vital interests of the tourist industry, a potential money spinner for a Government eager to fully utilize the resources at hand.³

Mosely was right to stress the connection between the work of the S.P.B. and the State's fledgling tourist

industry, but he failed to grasp the full implication of this. From the outset, the Board's interests were inextricably linked to the development ethos. The implications were enormous for the future of scenery preservation as it meant that the key issues which would concern the Board would be assessed not by aesthetic, scientific or historical criteria, but by economics. The realization was a shock to the preservationists but it was the price they were to pay for emphasising tourism in their efforts to gain centralized control of flora, fauna and scenery preservation prior to 1915.

The implication of casting their lot with a development orientated Government may have escaped the immediate awareness of the proto-conservationists, but they held no illusions about the physical limitations upon the Board's resources. William Crooke and his colleagues in the National Park Association lobbied the Government for the constitution of a separate Board to manage the proposed National Park at Mt. Field. They argued that such a Board would be able to improve tracks and shelters, carrying out the tasks the Scenery Preservation Board could not because its time was taken up 'in town'.⁴ The Government was impressed by the argument, with the fact that it was being offered a service virtually gratis no doubt playing a key role in its favourable response, and, in 1916, a decision was made to create a subsidiary Board. Seats on the Board

were given to the Chairman of the S.P.B., the Engineer in Chief, the Government Botanist and representatives of the National Park Association, the Tourist Branch of the Railway Department, the Hobart and New Norfolk Councils, the University, the Royal Society, the Fisheries Commission, the Field Naturalists and the Australian Natives Association.

While the Government was motivated by economic necessity, the system they created in establishing subsidiary Boards was of vital importance to the management and protection of the State reserves. The subsidiary Boards remained the most important means by which the proto-conservationists could exercise limited influence upon the S.P.B. and the Government. Though the S.P.B. was often constrained by bureaucratic niceties, the subsidiary Boards were able to offer overt criticism of any Government actions which they considered endangered the integrity of the reserve system for which they, and their parent Board, were responsible.

The tension between aims of the proto-conservationists and the prevailing development ethos became patently obvious at the opening of National Park in October 1917. Even though naturalists were getting a flora and fauna sanctuary, recreationalists a public playground and the Government a tourist attraction, dissent existed as to which function was primary. The role of the

Park as a public playground for the pleasure of all was accepted and caused little difficulty. However, between the proto-conservationists and the Government, disagreement was all too apparent.

The Mercury was adamant in its editorial stance: the Park existed for the glory of Nature, a primeval sanctuary of native flora and fauna preserved in perpetuity for future generations. It spoke highly of the 'broad minded and public spirited conservators' Tasmania already had, but warned of those not so imbued with love of nature.

The only creature to be driven out of the Park and kept out with flaming swords is the Utilitarian, who would indiscriminately chop trees, spoil waterfalls, dig up rare plants, kill live things and spoil and ravage and destroy everything for money profit. If there ever came to exist legislators who cannot see the value of such a place we hope it will become recognised custom to shoot them on sight whenever seen within three miles of the Park.⁵

Extreme sentiment such as this ignored the simple fact that the Park had been created by utilitarians and no matter the extent to which the Mercury decried 'filthy lucre' it was ultimately the driving force behind proclamation.

The Government had a clear perception of the role the Park was to play. J.B. Hayes, Minister for Lands stated that, "he for one had never under-estimated the value of the

tourist traffic to Tasmania" a theme also pursued by other speakers, enthusiastic to cast their lot with the infant tourist industry.

The Governor, Sir Francis Newdegate delivered what the Mercury described as a 'happy speech', extolling the scenic beauty of Tasmania and the National Park in particular. However, it soon became apparent that Sir Francis saw Tasmania's potential as lying in more than scenic beauty. By harnessing its water supply, Sir Francis believed the State could become one of the great industrial centres of the Southern Hemisphere. It may appear strange that at the opening of a National Park, where one would expect Nature to hold centre stage, tourism and industry received the limelight. Such was the pervasiveness of the development ethos among Government circles, every action of the Government was discussed within that framework.

The ebullience of the Governor was well received by the parochial crowd, eager to hear of the industrial potential of their island, but not so William Crooke who tempered proceedings with a portentous comment to the effect that,

... the idea of the Park was not originally conceived simply for tourists. Only by preserving a park in this way would the people of Tasmania in the future be able to see what primeval Tasmania was like. That

was one of the objects. Another was the preservation of native flora and fauna and still another the recreation of the people of Tasmania. The tourists to his mind came last, although he was always pleased to see them.

Crooke might well have saved his breath. The crowd, buoyed by the gaiety of the occasion and no doubt keen to watch the wood chopping events which were to follow, was not interested in Crooke's hair-splitting. National Park had been proclaimed and everyone, save a few settlers whose land had been taken up by the extended reserve, were happy. However, beneath the joviality, the differing perceptions of the Park's future role cannot be ignored. The Government, attracted to the idea originally for its tourist potential, saw the foundation of National Park as part of the State's development. The proto-conservationists acknowledged the tourist potential of parks and reserves but emphasized their aesthetic and scientific value. The two views could co-exist in the short term, but it was with the Government, and not individuals such as Crooke, that the fate of the State's parks and reserves would rest. The proto-conservationists were in no position to rest on their laurels.

The Government was quick to realize that the terms of the original Scenery Preservation Act were too rigid, as land proclaimed under its aegis was virtually exempt from alternative forms of resource utilization. When a proposal

came forward that a reserve be proclaimed in an area between Cradle Mt. and Lake St. Clair, the opportunity was taken to make the Act more amenable for developmental interests. Gustav Weindorfer arrived in Tasmania for the first time in 1909 and was immediately struck by the scenic beauty of the Cradle Mountain area. Having selected land in 1910, Weindorfer built his famous chalet which became popular with tourists after 1912.⁶ At the second meeting of the S.P.B. in 1916⁷, the area was recommended for reservation but it was not until after 1920 that the cause was taken up in earnest by Weindorfer and his friends.

In 1921 Weindorfer travelled to Hobart and put the case for a reserve in the Cradle Mt- Lake St. Clair area.⁸ The issue was of vital interest to the proto-conservationists, the scenery in the area was spectacular and the native flora and fauna were in need of protection from both fire and hunter. As a result individuals such as E.T. Emmett of the Tourist Association, Clive Lord of the Field Naturalists and Fred Smithies took an avid interest in the proposal supporting Weindorfer's claim. Smithies, coming from the north of the State, was to have a life long association with the reserve system, through his membership of the Cradle Mt. Board (C.M.B.), the Northern Scenery Board, and finally the S.P.B. itself until 1971.

The issue was complicated by the economic potential of

the area and the Government was clearly not willing to preclude exploitation. Some form of compromise was necessary. One novel idea suggested was that the area be proclaimed a 'National Reserve' enabling game and timber to be taken in moderate amounts while another proposed the introduction of deer and chamois, as well as the planting of conifers.⁹ However, the Government decided that the best course of action was to amend the original Act. In 1921 an amendment was passed which allowed any land acquired under the Scenery Preservation Act to be subsequently exempt from its provision where considered expedient. In conjunction with Section 16 and 17 of the original Act, which allowed for the alteration of reserve boundaries where necessary and the granting of short term leases, fears that land reserved under the Act would be 'locked up' for ever were alleviated.

By degrees, the status of reserves was being defined. Clearly the emphasis was upon their economic utilization where that opportunity existed. They were not, as the proto-conservationists hoped, inviolate sanctuaries for flora and fauna; instead, under the development ethos reserves were natural, multi-use enclaves, the status of which was to be continually assessed against the economic potential of alternative use. Development interests safeguarded, a 158,000 acre reserve was proclaimed in 1922. As it was, the Government displayed little interest in the

area, a subsidiary Board for the Cradle Mt. end of the Reserve was not established until 1927 and it was not until 1933 that any money was spent on the area.¹⁰

Between 1922 and 1938 the S.P.B. was all but defunct. With its initial work completed the Board had little to maintain its enthusiasm. In fact, during the entire period only two reserves were proclaimed, they being Mt. Strzelecki on Flinders Island and near Weldborough in the States North East.¹¹ The Board's loss of enthusiasm was indicated by the declining frequency of meetings, often convened merely to authorize the Chairman's annual report. These reports indicated a lack of finance and a subsequent inability to carry out all but the most basic repairs and development of the reserve under its control. The subsidiary Boards were left to carry out much of the work the S.P.B. should have been responsible for. In 1931 the Chairman of the Board stated,

At present the most useful work appears to be to preserve our scenic resorts from being sold, so that when population increases they may have the benefits of areas which are well worthwhile developing into attractions for travellers.¹²

This holding exercise was in itself no easy task. The Board was little more than a paper tiger unable to enforce the provisions of the Act in many of the reserves under its control. The Board constantly had to rely upon the officers

of other departments to protect its reserves, this provided one of the reasons for the Police and Forestry Departments gaining representation on the Board in 1938.

During the 1930's, two issues were to indicate the extent to which the Board's activities were being shaped by the development ethos. In March 1938 the Advocate reported that promising mineral fields had been discovered near Mt. Pelion and exploitation of the area was being considered by Parliament as it was part of the Cradle Mt. - Lake St. Clair Reserve.¹³ This was not the first time minerals had been discovered in the region, prospectors had discovered traces of tin, coal, gold and silver previously and the Mines Department had resisted efforts to extend the reserve in 1933 on the grounds that it would interfere with prospecting.¹⁴ In the case reported by the Advocate, the Mines Department and prospectors were confident that the area would yield commercial quantities of wolfram, a tungsten-bearing ore.

The issue was clear cut for the Mines Department, a potential mineral resource existed which should be exploited. However, their proposals met staunch opposition, not exclusively from the S.P.B. but also from the Cradle Mountain Reserve Board (C.M.B.) which controlled the area. The conflict between the Scenery Preservation agencies and the more powerful Mines Department provides one of the first

instances where an attempt was made to resist the force of the development ethos and for that reason it merits attention.

When the wolfram mine issue first came to the attention of the C.M.B. it immediately voiced its opposition.¹⁵ It used an amalgam of ecocentric and economic arguments which demonstrated a realization that to hope that an area would be exempt from exploitation simply because of its scenic or scientific interest was pointless. In an effort to appeal to the logic of the development ethos, the C.M.B. maintained that mining in the Mt. Pelion area had previously proved unprofitable and the wolfram mine would follow a similar fate thus leading to a lack of confidence in ventures needing investment elsewhere in the State. The Board also noted the value of the mixed hardwood and pine forest in the area. It was argued that this could be lost as it was common practice for prospectors to fire areas in search of mineral bearing outcrops.

The C.M.B.'s stress on economics was a reflection of the times. In the years following the Depression, economics rather than aesthetics was the language of Government. In 1941 when mining in the reserve was still under debate, the C.M.B. felt it necessary to point out that it was,

fully alive to the importance of the mining industry to the State and should there be at any time any real prospect of a major development of mining in any portion of the Reserve, the Board would do their utmost to facilitate it being opened up.¹⁶

The comment may appear anomalous, weakening the stand being taken on conservationist principle , but to oppose development was to oppose the best interests of the State.

The C.M.B's opposition to the wolfram mine proposal on economic grounds had some justification, but it was little more than a calculated placebo designed to appeal to the development agencies such as the Mines Department. Behind this facade, the C.M.B. was obviously more concerned about the precedent being set by allowing mining in a Reserve and the damage to the scenery which would result. As history was to show, the C.M.B. was right to allege that to approve the wolfram mine proposal was to establish a precedent which would undermine the integrity of the reserve system.¹⁷ It was a precedent the Mines Department was eager to see established, as it saw the issue as indicating the problems arising from 'locking up' mineral resources in reserves.¹⁸

The value of scenery was difficult if not impossible to quantify and, therefore, the C.M.B. appears to have almost understated its significance in comparison with other factors. Yet, it must be acknowledged as the key issue underlying their opposition to the wolfram mines proposal.

The C.M.B. indicated that the area in question was an integral part of the Reserve. As one of its natural entrances, the route up the Forth Gorge via Sheffield and Lorinna contained some of the best forest and fern scenery in the whole area and its exclusion would be a distinct loss, particularly considering the increasing number of tourists visiting the region.¹⁹

The C.M.B.'s perceptions of what was in the best interests of the State, and those of the Government, clearly differed. In the process of amending the Scenery Preservation Act in 1938, A.G. Ogilvie's Government cleared the way for acceptance of the wolfram mines proposal.²⁰ The amended Act specifically indicated that by exempting an area from the provisions of the Act for mining purposes, or by complete revocation, mining within the boundaries of the State reserves was allowed. However, the S.P.B. was given authority over the process. In making an area available for mining, the Board had to be convinced that "the material advantages outweighed the disadvantages thereof," and, in consideration of that question, the Board was to consider not only pecuniary advantage but also, 'any other advantages'. Presumably this meant the possible scenic, scientific or historical interest an area may have.

The odds were loaded against the S.P.B. vetoing any proposals and the Government and the Mines Department

clearly intended the legislation to remove any legal barriers to their plans. However, the S.P.B., sticking to the letter of the law, delayed giving its consent on the wolfram mines proposal. It supported the stand of the C.M.B. and continued to raise doubts concerning the economic viability of the proposal and reiterated the area's scenic interest and potential as a forest resource.²¹

The Mines Department had been pushing the proposal since 1937 and by March 1939 had lost patience with the S.P.B. protestations. In a short, but intense, exchange with the Board, the Mines Department made its attitude abundantly clear. It indicated that the Act had been amended in 1938 with the express purpose of removing legal difficulties which precluded mining from reserves. The Mines Department stated that further delays were intolerable and immediate action in the manner desired was demanded.²²

As if to put the matter completely beyond doubt, the Secretary for Mines wrote to the S.P.B., indicating the necessary priority of development over any notion of the special status or inherent value of reserves,

In the interests of primary production and the unemployment menace, further delay in dealing with this matter is not justified. Every days postponement means a loss of revenue for the State and unwarranted hindrance to the possible production of a very valuable mineral.²³

In real terms, this amounted to an assertion of the priority of development over any objections raised in the interests of scenery preservation by the Board or its subsidiary. The S.P.B. had no option but to acquiesce but not without coercing some concession from the Mines Department. It was agreed that a lease granted by the Department would contain Section 15 of the Scenery Preservation Act which restricted lighting of fires, hunting or damage to scenic or historic features in reserves. Importantly, the Board also gained an assurance that, should the wolfram mine cease to operate within five years, the land would be reclaimed as a reserve.²⁴ In 1944 the Cradle Mt. Board reported that activity had ceased at the wolfram mine. When the S.P.B. subsequently informed the Mines Department that the area would be restored to the Reserve, the Mines Department replied that such action would not meet with its requirements.²⁵

The interests of the S.P.B. and those of the Mines Department stood in marked opposition over the wolfram mines issue. However, it was more than a bureaucratic wrangle. It represented the conflict between the development ethos and the vaguely defined values of the proto-conservationists. The struggle was unequal from the outset. The development ethos was backed by the power of conviction, a conviction that development was in the best

interests of the State as it struggled from the grip of Depression. It was a self perpetuating belief which claimed adherents in the Government and community at large, development generated revenue which improved the daily lives of the community. The proto-conservationists were unsure of themselves: their beliefs supported by an uneasy amalgam of economics and aesthetics, they were easily ignored. The S.P.B. itself was powerless once the Government refused to be cajoled any longer, its values were unclear and difficult to quantify, its opposition to the Mines Department ultimately futile.

The 1930's had raised another issue in which the S.P.B. became embroiled. The H.E.C., as part of its power development plans, decided to dam the outlet of Lake St. Clair, raising the level of the lake. The project resulted in the inundation of the foreshore, in particular the Frankland Beaches and a group of islets at the Southern end of the Lake which had become a significant tourist attraction. It also resulted in considerable public protest, one of the first issues to do so. Feelings ran high enough for one outraged protestor to suggest planting a bomb under the H.E.C. dam.²⁶

The Commission plans went ahead and the issue was not one of whether or not the Lake's level would be raised, but how far and what action would be taken to alleviate damage

to scenery. The S.P.B. was presented with a fait accompli, but attempted to gain assurances from the Commission that dead trees would be removed from the edge of the Lake. However, it was little more than a plea. The Chairman, Pitt summed up the Board's position in 1940.

This Board can only hope that when the time comes the H.E.C. will make good the damage that has been done and any further damage that may occur in the meantime.²⁷

The issue was never clearly resolved but the now familiar problem reasserted itself. The Board's perceptions, and to a greater extent those of the proto-conservationists, of what constituted damage to scenery and those of development authorities such as the H.E.C. differed markedly. The Board, with no real power and with representatives of the main developmental agencies, Forestry, Lands, and the H.E.C. as members, was in no position to aggressively challenge the development ethos. Yet its protest over the wolfram mines issue and the raising of the level of Lake St. Clair indicate that the conservation / anti-conservation dichotomy does not explain the attitude taken by the Board. Clearly, it was concerned with the integrity of the reserve system and the aesthetic value of certain areas within those reserves, however it was constantly forced to recognize the overriding belief that development must take place, a belief based upon the values of technocentrism as they had evolved in Tasmania, and which themselves were entrenched in the

S.P.B. structure by virtue of its membership.

The late 1930's may have been a period of conflict for the Board but it was also a period of important achievement. Between 1938 and 1941 sixteen reserves were proclaimed after a period of relative inactivity.²⁸ Mosley attributes this to the personal interest of A.G. Ogilvie in tourism.²⁹ No doubt this holds part of the answer but one must not overlook the role of the Chairman who took over the Board in 1938, Colin Pitt.³⁰

On becoming Surveyor General, Pitt automatically became Chairman of the S.P.B. In later years, the Board was to criticise this process as it was quite simply a matter of luck as to whether the new Surveyor General had any interest in scenery preservation or not. In the case of Colin Pitt, fate dealt the Board a kind hand for he was an extremely energetic person under whose control between 1938 and 1953, the Board's activities diversified and were more effectively organized within the parameters of limited staff and finance.

In the late 1930's Pitt and Allan Knight, then with the Public Works Department, were both working on the West Coast roads and it became obvious that Pitt planned to rejuvenate the ailing Board, inviting Knight to join him in this. As Chairman, Pitt reconstituted the parent Board and

its subsidiaries and managed to squeeze more finance from the Government. Both men came to the task with a genuine interest in scenery preservation, but both also were products of the development ethos and thus had to reconcile this, not only in their own minds but in the activities of the Board.

Shackel has sought to understand the process by characterizing all debate over environmental issues since at least the 1930's as being either pro or anti-conservation.³¹ His simplistic analysis breaks down when applied to people such as Knight, Pitt and other members of the Board. Shackel's interpretative matrix represented an inability to comprehend the complexities faced by individuals and organizations in balancing ecocentrism and technocentrism. The proto-conservationists and their successors in an effort to establish a set of values by which to evaluate environmental issues, other than those of the development ethos, characterized development as implying greed and 'Mans destroying hand'.³² The language and images used by the proto-conservationists and their modern counterparts such as Shackel evoked a Luddite-like resistance to the march of technology. In truth, as events were to indicate such fears were at times justified, but in the course of defending their hard won ground, the dichotomy between 'bushwalker/ conservationist' idealists and developmental philistines has been used too freely: in

reality, the differences were between competing structures of values which must be understood if they are to be changed.

By 1945 the Board had reserved close to 300,000 acres of the State in 53 separate reserves. They included roadside reserves, rivers, alpine country, coastal areas, historic site and caves.³³ The statistics were impressive but masked a struggle in which the Board found itself to be the battleground. Established largely through compromise by the proto-conservationists, in 1945 the reserve system was still analysed by the criteria of the development ethos. The small group of largely urban middle class individuals who were the State's proto-conservationists struggled through the Board and its subsidiaries to protect the integrity of the State's parks and reserves. Their efforts had wrought some success thus far, but in 1945 the S.P.B. was on the verge of a crisis greater than any it had yet faced.

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Chapter Three: A Crisis at Mt. Field 1946-1950.

The Florentine River Valley lies just to the west of Mt. Field National Park. In 1935 it became part of Australian Newsprint Mills (A.N.M.) timber concessions and as such was logged until 1946. At that time Mt. Field National Park extended well down into the Florentine Valley, encompassing within its Western boundary a magnificent forest of *Eucalyptus regnans*, one of the tallest flowering hardwoods in the world. *Regnans* were also significant for commercial reasons. It was A.N.M.'s chief source of hardwood fibre, essential for the production of newsprint. In 1946 A.N.M. placed an application before the Board requesting an alteration to National Park's Western boundary so that it could log the stand of *Eucalyptus regnans* lying there, the Board refused and so began a debate which was to last for four years concerning the fate of the forest. It was to provide an issue on which the values of the developmentalists and those of the S.P.B. were thrown into contrast. The conflict was to assert once again the primacy of the development ethos.

To place the issue in context it is necessary to return to the dark days of the Depression in the early 1930's. Robson has described the severe social and economic dislocation of those years, marked as they were by labour disputes, the inevitable dole queues, government relief and

massive unemployment.² In 1934 when the worst years of the Depression had only just passed Tasmania went to the polls and returned a Labor Government led by A.G. Ogilvie.

Under Ogilvie the State began the long road to recovery. New Government enterprises offered work to the unemployed, roads were built such as that to the pinnacle of Mt. Wellington, and H.E.C. projects were undertaken. The role of the H.E.C. was vital to the State's long term security. The power generated by the Commission was to provide the power for industry. In the wake of the Depression, Ogilvie saw State-backed industrialization as the solution to both unemployment and economic stagnation. Ogilvie addressed the State's problems with the sense of vigour for which he was renowned. The Examiner was able to report that under his leadership, Tasmania had ceased to be a sleepy hollow, its inferiority complex removed. In short, the Island had been given a sense of purpose.³

That sense of purpose was largely responsible for Tasmania's slow but steady recovery from the Depression. Unemployment decreased, and with the completion of the H.E.C. project at Tarraleah, a symbol of regeneration was provided. In 1937 further proof was forthcoming that Tasmania would emerge from the Depression stronger than before. A.N.M. began production of newsprint at their Boyer

mills from hardwood fibre, a world first and an example of State-backed industrialization in action.

The establishment of the newsprint industry would have been impossible without extensive Government support. This was given under the terms of the Florentine Valley Wood Pulp and Paper Industry Act of 1935.⁴ This Act formalised Government support for the industry, granting the Derwent Valley Trading Company, which would amalgamate with Australian Newspaper Proprietors in 1937 to form A.N.M., extensive timber concessions in the Nive, Styx, and Florentine Valleys. Robert Cosgrove, Minister for Forests, stated that the industry would bring to Tasmania. £ 3000000 of capital investment followed by. £ 240000 per annum on employment, .£ 100000 per annum on H.E.C. power, and £ 4-5000 per annum in timber royalties. In 1935 when recovery from the Depression had only just begun, Cosgrove's statistics appeared as manna from Heaven to an embattled State.

The spectre of the Depression was to loom large in the consciousness of a generation of Tasmanians. It was only natural that those factors associated with recovery, the H.E.C. and industrialization should assume such importance in post-Depression society. The development ethos emerged from the 1930's with an aura of moral force: it was the source of recovery, progress and security, to defy development was to defy common sense.

However, by 1945 some reservations were being expressed concerning the activities of the wood pulp and paper industry. In a Report to the Conservator of Forests it was argued that Tasmania's forest resources were being denuded at a much faster rate than re-forestation was taking place.⁵ It was stated that A.N.M.'s envisaged expansion, would only serve to make an already critical situation worse. Furthermore, the Report claimed that the Island's remaining forests were only mere remnants of the magnificent stands of timber which had once existed, their depletion largely due to lack of interest in regeneration and conservation on behalf of the State's wood pulp and paper industries. In view of this, the Report recommended that no further agreements between the Government and the pulp and paper industry be entered into until a complete survey of forests had been carried out, and an agreement reached on the industry's maximum future intake capacity of timber. The author of the Report was S.L. Kessell. In 1946 as A.N.M.'s new Managing Director, Kessel placed a proposal before the S.P.B. which would result in the alienation of some 5,000 acres from the Mt. Field National Park so that it could be logged as part of A.N.M.'s Florentine Valley Timber Concession.

The A.N.M. move acted as a catalyst for a major conflict between the Board and the forces of development.

The working out of that conflict provides an important insight into the pervasiveness and strength of the development ethos in Tasmanian society at that time.

The forest in question represented one of the last remaining extensive stands of *Eucalyptus regnans* in the State, its preservation, in the Board's view, was therefore a necessity. Regnans was also a vital source of hardwood fibre. A.N.M. wlls to argue that the amount of regnans available in its original concession was insufficient to meet the forecast needs of the expanding industry, expansion which could only be met by utilization of the forest which in 1946 was part of the Park.

To secure the forest for logging, A.N.M. made three separate applications to the S.P.B. between 1946 and 1948, each of which the Board refused. The first proposal, in September 1946 requested a simple alteration of the Park's boundaries to allow logging to take place. In return for this, A.N.M. was prepared to exchange certain areas of forest it controlled bordering on the Parks northern and southern boundaries.⁶

After careful consideration, the Board refused A.N.M.'s request. In July 1947, a second plan was laid before the Board, this time by the Premier himself. Cosgrove, having succeeded Ogilvie and Dwyer-Gray as

Premier, threw his full weight behind the A.N.M. move. Under the terms of this second proposal, in exchange for the forest sought by A.N.M., the Board was offered 12,000 acres on Mt. Hobhouse to the north west of Mt. Field, as well as an extension to the existing Park. However, even the personal involvement of Cosgrove was unable to weaken the Board's resolve, and again any alienation of the land from the Park was rejected.

Cosgrove's intervention at this point merits some attention, and must be seen within the context of other events occurring in Tasmanian politics at that time. Towards the end of 1947 Roy Fagan, the youthful Attorney-General, was put in the unenviable position of having to indict his own Premier on a conspiracy charge. It was alleged that bribes had been paid into Cosgrove's secret slush-fund by private road transport companies eager to avoid their nationalization as had been demanded by the Labor Party. The Premier was forced to step down from office. However, charges could not be substantiated and Cosgrove was acquitted, "the chief witness being of bad character and uncorroborated."⁷ This was not enough for some and Cosgrove's involvement in the A.N.M. proposal was to raise queries of high level corruption.⁸ The claim could never be substantiated, but it was patently obvious that A.N.M. had important allies in the halls of power.

In January 1948 a final proposition was put to the Board on the basis of a Forestry Commission recommendation. The Mt. Hobhouse idea was scrapped and, in return for granting A.N.M. control over the area it required on the Park's Western boundary, the Board was to be given control of an area of A.N.M. concession in the Russell Falls Valley.⁹ Intense pressure was being placed upon the Board to accommodate A.N.M.'s wishes, but to no avail. The Board had decided that a matter of principle was involved upon which compromise was impossible.

A.N.M., the Government and later the Forestry Commission saw exploitation of the National Park forest as an economic necessity. Cosgrove believed that without extension to the A.N.M. concession, the life of the industry would be limited to twenty years.¹⁰ In similar vein, the Forestry Commission had stated that acceptance of the A.N.M. proposal represented a

reasonable utilization of timber resources available, in consideration of the Australian importance of the newsprint industry.¹¹

The Commission, established in 1920 under the Forestry Act was one of the State's main developmental authorities.¹² Furthermore, being responsible for the administration of State forests and the exploitation of timber on Crown lands, its interests were closely allied with those of the woodchip

and paper industries. It was inevitably drawn into the conflict over Mt Field.

However, when faced with the Board's recalcitrance, the developmentalists could no longer simply rely upon the economics of forest resource utilization to support their view and were forced to consider the scientific, aesthetic and recreational value of the area as part of the National Park. Accessibility became a key factor in the assault upon the Board. Cosgrove, reflecting the popular developmentalist attitude that parks and reserves were of primary value as tourist attractions, proposed that the forest claimed by A.N.M. was inaccessible and therefore of no value to the public. Cosgrove, A.N.M. and the Forestry Commission were to present the areas offered in exchange for the Park's forest as being more accessible and of greater scientific and scenic interest.¹³

Attempts to justify alteration of land from Mt. Field National Park in terms of the scientific, aesthetic and recreational value of areas offered in exchange must be viewed with some scepticism. Development was clearly the motive force behind the Government-backed A.N.M. proposal, and scenery preservation and public recreation would have to conform to its exigencies. A statement by the Forestry Commission illustrated the point.

The areas of the National Park sought by the Company is not of real scenic value ... the area and the timber resource are too large to hold as a specimen of virgin forest conditions.¹⁴

The Board's position was indeed invidious and yet, under Pitt's leadership, it was to cling tenaciously to its belief that, on the Mt. Field issue, a stand would have to be made.

Under the terms of the Scenery Preservation Act, the Board felt it had a duty to protect the areas under its control. Knight echoed a commonly expressed sentiment among Board members when he stated,

These areas are put in our trust and we would be going beyond our proper function in handing the area over.¹⁵

However, the S.P.B. stand was based upon more than a perception of duty. In a detailed submission to the Minister for Lands, the Board set out its argument in full.¹¹

The Board felt that acquiescence on this issue would endanger the integrity of the whole parks and reserve system. If commercial interests were accommodated in this instance, a precedent would be clearly established against which little defence could be raised. Aesthetically and scientifically, the contentious area was seen as being of

unique value as an example of virgin eucalypt forest. Its relative inaccessibility was a positive contributing factor in its preservation. In comparison, the Board, after inspection of the various areas offered in exchange by A.N.M., stated that they were considered to be of inferior quality. Objections were also made to the A.N.M. proposal on the basis of Kessell's own 1945 report which had been full of foreboding concerning the future of Tasmania's forests. If as A.N.M. argued, the situation had become so critical that the industry's very future was threatened if logging did not take place inside the Park's boundaries, then the case for preservation had itself become urgent. In this instance therefore, the Board saw itself as having a clear duty to future generations to preserve some areas of the State's forests in their virgin state.

The values the Board saw itself as defending defied accurate definition, ultimately depending upon a subjective appraisal of an area. Nevertheless, it was able to state;

... the Board considers that growing timber, forests and native vegetation in general are essential elements in the classification of scenery, and that in accordance with the terms of the Act, it must insist on the protection of vegetation where this is of scenic value, just as it endeavours to ensure the protection of other vital elements.¹¹

The bureaucratic war fought by the Board effectively thwarted A.N.M. and Government plans. By July 1947

exasperation at the Board's intransigence was being expressed by Cosgrove and his Cabinet for without the Board's cooperation progress could not be made.¹⁸ The only solution open to the Government was to over-ride S.P.B. opposition by an Act of Parliament.

The key to the Government's legislative attack upon the Board's position were doubts raised concerning the actual position of the National Park's western boundary. When Kessell had first approached the Board in 1946 concerning his company's plans to log forests then lying within the Park, he argued that the area had originally been intended as part of A.N.M.'s Florentine Valley concession. He believed the forest A.N.M. required had been included in the Park by misadventure rather than design.¹⁹

The argument was ill-founded for the boundaries of the Park had been defined on four separate occasions, the last appearing in the Tasmanian Government Gazette in June 1938.²⁰ Furthermore, the Florentine Valley Wood Pulp and Paper Industry Act of 1935 had specifically stated that the A.N.M. Florentine Valley timber concession excluded, 'those areas included in the National Park.'²¹

The question became one of locating the boundary on the ground from information provided in the various gazetted proclamations. The Government and A.N.M. continued to hold

that this was impossible because an accurate ground survey of the Western boundary had never been carried out. Pitt, whom it must be remembered was Surveyor-General as well as Chairman of the S.P.B., insisted that the forests on the western boundary had been deliberately included in the Park so as to ensure an area of virgin eucalypt forest would be preserved.²²

Pitt's protests were ignored and in February 1949 Cosgrove, now returned as Premier, announced that a Bill was to be submitted to the House, 'to clear up doubts about the boundaries of Mt. Field National Park and the timber concessions held by A.N.M.'. ²³ The Bill proposed by the Government, if accepted, would implement the final proposal which had been placed before the Board in January.

Government hopes of quietly circumventing S.P.B. opposition to its plans were dashed as the Bill became hotly debated in Parliament and the community at large, division occurring along philosophical rather than party lines. Dr. Reginald Turnbull, himself a Labor member, was a vociferous critic of his own party's actions, denouncing them as evidence of submission to high pressure salesmanship. Angus Bethune, a future Liberal Premier voiced his opposition to any alienation of land or forest from a reserve dedicated to the people.²³

Not all Liberals were opposed to the Bill. John Fidler could see little sense in the S.P.B.'s stand and was,

opposed to any large area of timber being held by any organization just to look at.²⁵

Similarly John Wright, Deputy Leader of the Opposition stated that

he yielded to no-one in his appreciation of forest beauty, but it was flying in the face of common sense to reserve such a large area of uncultivated bush and leave it to the haphazard risk of nature.²⁶

The boundary question had obviously become peripheral to a more basic conflict between the aims of development and scenery preservation.

Debate spilled over into the pages of the Mercury. The paper's sympathies lay with the source of its newsprint; editorials, while appearing cautious, firmly supported the Government/A.N.M. line. In 1917 the Mercury had argued that park despoilers should be shot, but had changed its tune by 1949.

The essence of the situation is that the newsprint company has a moral but not a legal right to the strip of forest now necessary for development.²⁷

The proto-conservationists formed a small but significant opposition to any moves to alienate forests from Mt. Field National Park. Their influence was marked on the Mt. Field National Park Board where strong support was given to the S.P.B. stand. Apart from this, a public campaign was launched to oppose the Bill put forward by the Government. Letters were written to the Mercury countering Government and A.N.M. claims, petitions were circulated and Members of Parliament lobbied.²⁸

In March 1949, all parties were provided with an opportunity to air their views when the National Park and Florentine Valley Bill was brought before a Joint Committee for recommendation.²⁹ Under the chairmanship of Eric Reece, Minister for Lands and Works, the Committee heard evidence from thirty-four witnesses including representatives from A.N.M., Government departments, the S.P.B., the Mt. Field National Park Board and local sawmillers. The views of public organizations were also heard. The Field Naturalists, the Australian Natives Association, the Country Women's Association, the National Fitness Council and Hobart Walking Club all submitted evidence to the Committee.

The Committee failed to agree on the crucial issue of Mt. Field National Park's western boundary, returning the Bill to Parliament without recommendation, necessitating a second Joint Committee of enquiry. This was convened in

December but Parliament was dissolved before a report could be considered. It was not until October 1950 that a third Joint Committee submitted a report which finally cleared the way for an alteration of the Park's boundaries.³⁰ After hearing evidence from the Deputy Surveyor General based upon recently developed surveying methods, the Committee, again chaired by Reece, recommended that a new boundary of the National Park be defined to the east of that previously proclaimed. Under the Proposal 3680 acres were to be excised from the National Park which was to be offset partly by A.N.M. surrendering rights to an area of approximately 4000 acres to the south in the Russell Falls Valley.

The Committee, in its wisdom, saw fit to offer further recompense for the existing land from the National Park,

In compensation to the National Park Board for losing a valuable area of virgin forest to the newsprint company which will be called upon to pay royalties to the Forestry Commission for utilizing the timber so gained, the Board's annual grant should be increased to aid in the development of Mt. Field National Park.³¹

In December the Act was passed and another bitter chapter of defeat had closed in the history of the S.P.B..³²

The Board's efforts appear almost quixotic in hindsight, a part time group of public servants and volunteers with little more than advisory powers, standing

in opposition to the might of development. However, behind this tragi-comedy one detects a more serious scenario. By 1950 the Board as an agency managing the State's parks and reserves was virtually powerless to defend them either from natural dangers such as fire, or the more serious threat of commercial exploitation.

The Board, like the proto-conservationists, identified a need for society to preserve its environmental heritage as part of the cultural baggage that would be handed on to future generations. The criteria for assessing such significant areas were essentially aesthetic and scientific. Crucially however, their integrity could only be guaranteed while they were of no recognisable economic potential.

For their part, purveyors of the development ethos, individuals such as Cosgrove, Ogilvie, Kessell and the Forestry Commission, were not opposed to conservation per se, but rather their decisions were framed within a different set of values, economics rather than aesthetics being their benchmark. The point becomes quite obvious when one recognises that on various issues, even the developmentalists spoke in terms remarkably similar to those of the proto-conservationists, one need only refer to Kessell's 1945 report or Ogilvie's interest in rejuvenating the S.P.B.'s flagging fortunes in 1938.

The situation was clearly quite complex though from the Mt. Field issue one may draw several threads of significance for the future. Firstly, the development ethos emerged unchecked, its tenets providing the framework for government thinking and decision making. Secondly, the proto-conservationists gained a new sense of purpose from the Mt. Field crisis, the energy they had channeled into that debate being harnessed for future combat with the formation of the Tasmanian Flora and Fauna Committee. The passivity, and unsophisticated arguments for flora and fauna preservation which had marked the proto-conservationists of old was gradually being superseded. A new breed of politically active environmental campaigners more properly called conservationists rather than proto-conservationists was slowly coming into being. A third factor must be considered. The S.P.B. was never to stand so firmly in the face of the development ethos again. It entered the 1950's with more staff, a more diverse range of interests, and a larger budget than previously and yet somehow chastened by the experiences of its past. The realisation must have been there for those who wished to see it that the S.P.B. was entering the 1950's firmly manacled to the development ethos.

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Chapter Four: Diversification and Decline. 1950 - 1971.

In July 1965 Eric Reece, now leader of the Labor Party, devoted his weekly address 'The Premier Speaks' to the S.P.B., for it was the Board's jubilee year. Reece's comments painted a glowing picture of expanding operations, increasing status and a bright future.¹ Two years later, a Legislative Council Select Committee recommended the Board's dissolution, and the establishment of a new authority.² The catalyst for this reversal lies beneath fifteen metres of inky black water at the base of the Frankland Range in Tasmania's South West. The Board's decision to support the inundation of Lake Pedder was a fateful one, made not as some would suggest because of an inherent opposition to conservation, but because it was intrinsically bonded to the exigencies of development. The two were not necessarily mutually exclusive, but in the late 1960's the debate on the environment polarized and in the process the newly emerged conservation groups saw the Board as having more in common with the developmentalists than themselves. The chroniclers of the conservation movement³ have ignored the Board and the conundrum it faced; it has become much easier to condemn than to understand.

The development ethos continued unabated after 1950 as the dominant ideology of Government, dictating policy, forming parameters of action and therefore affecting the

S.P.B. Cosgrove, remaining Premier until sickness forced his retirement in 1958, had made his commitment to the demands of development patently obvious on the Mt. Field issue and continued to do so after 1950 offering strong Government support to industry.⁴

Cosgrove's successor was Eric Reece. A miner's son from the Fingal Valley, Reece had struggled through his early life as a saw miller, miner and railway worker before becoming a union organizer. Entering Parliament after the 1946 elections, Reece was immediately appointed to Cabinet as an honorary Minister, rising from there to Minister for Lands and Works, and in 1958 to the position of Premier.⁵ Richard Davis describes Reece's Premiership as "a classical period of Labor rule", its lynch-pin, being the attracting of capital to the State by the provision of cheap hydro power, or as Davis terms it, hydro-industrialisation.⁶ It was no accident that in years to come Reece would become known as 'Electric Eric'.

The idea of attracting industry to the State by the provision of cheap electrical power was not a new one and may be traced as far back as the early 1920's.⁷ Under Reece it was claimed to result in some startling successes, for example, the development of iron-ore at Savage River on the West Coast, and expansion of the newsprint industry both at Boyer and in the north at Wesley Vale near Devonport.

However, the most spectacular example was provided at Bell Bay on the Tamar River where, in 1960, a joint Government - B.H.P. backed aluminium smelter was established. Ultimately run by Comalco, the Bell Bay plant consumed a staggering 30% of the State's power production.⁸

The issue of hydro-industrialisation leads to some mention of the H.E.C. itself, for the fate of the S.P.B. was closely entwined with the two after 1950. Bruce Davis has shown that, by the 1960's, the H.E.C. had built a formidable reputation for engineering excellence and the pioneering of new techniques in power generation and dam building. It was able to rely upon this, and direct access to Cabinet to gain approval for its recommendations.⁹ The political power of the Commission was such that in 1981 Peter Thompson was moved to write,

A single organization, the H.E.C. has become a State within a State. For more than fifty years, the Commission has played a virtually unchallenged role as economic, social and land use planner. It has been an organization operating in a power vacuum created by a succession of Parliaments which have never insisted upon the public accountability of the H.E.C.¹⁰

Neither Thompson nor Bruce Davis have adequately examined the historical connections between the political influence of the H.E.C., the development ethos and the Labor Party. It must be emphasised that in the consciousness of

Tasmanians a strong psychological bond had been forged between the H.E.C. and recovery from the Depression. The long and close association with the Labor Party strengthened because of this and gained potency as H.E.C. projects provided more jobs and generally more Labor voters in country electorates.¹¹

This entrenched support for hydro-industrialisation shaped all spheres of Government activity, including the work of the S.P.B. With the death of Pitt in 1953 a turning point was reached in the Board's history. Under his Chairmanship criticism of the development ethos, where it threatened the integrity of the reserve system, had been forthcoming. After his death, the Board's activities expanded but always within the tight constraints of the development ethos.

Until the 1940's the main activity of the Board was simply the creation of scenery reserves, as a result revenue had been negligible, and expenditure limited to care-taking and protection.¹² From that period onwards the Board's interests became more diversified as closer links with the tourist industry began to unfold. A striking example of this was in the preservation and management of historic sites. Though such action was provided for in the 1915 Act, little had been done until the mid 1940's other than the reservation of part of Port Arthur and a number of

monuments.¹³ Before Pitt became Chairman only two such areas had been proclaimed, by 1955 the figure had reached fifteen and by 1971 twenty-one.¹⁴ Of these sites most important were Entally House near Launceston and Port Arthur convict settlement on the Tasman Peninsula. Annual reports expended considerable space to descriptions of increasing patronage and important restoration works.¹⁵ Preservation of these along with locations such as the Steppes Homestead in the midlands, the Shot Tower in Hobart and Richmond Old Gaol were part of a renewed Government emphasis on tourism in which the S.P.B. played a key role. In 1965 Reece proudly announced that Port Arthur and Entally House were excellent examples of the Board's successful work, with nearly 300,000 visitors having paid to see Entally since 1950.¹⁶

Diversification was also evident in other areas. As early as 1936 Ogilvie had suggested that the S.P.B. as part of its charter to preserve scenery should control outdoor advertising. In 1957 this became a reality when the Board became responsible for administration of the Defacement of Property Act which was designed to control the erection of bill boards and advertisements along the State's highways.¹⁷ Hailed as "an advance of major significance in the preservation of rural scenery",¹⁸ approval had to be sought from the Board for every advertising hoarding throughout the State. Such concerns may now appear trite

but in the late 1950's, the fear was commonly expressed that Tasmania's highways would follow the pattern being set in countries such as the U.S.A. becoming a forest of bill boards and blotting out the natural scenery.¹⁹ The task was enormous but undertaken with relish. Applications for signs, such as that of the Empire Travel Service near Devonport, were refused because they were considered unsightly and a disfigurement to the landscape.²⁰

The national park and reserve system was itself another growth area. In 1946 at the instigation of the Government Tourist Bureau the State's major reserves were designated National Parks. At that stage these included Mt. Field, Freycinet Peninsula, Cradle Mt. - Lake St. Clair, Hartz Mountains, Mt. Barrow and Frenchman's Cap.²¹ Since 1950 National Parks had also been proclaimed at Ben Lomond, Rocky Cape and Lake Pedder the latter being subsumed within a larger South West National Park in 1968. In total by 1971 over one million acres of the State had been preserved under the Scenery Preservation Act.²²

The Government's support of the national park and reserve system was enthusiastic where the interests of development were not compromised and benefit to the tourist industry could be envisaged. In 1966 the Minister for Lands and Works, D.A. Cashion, indicated as much when he stated that funds should be concentrated upon the most popular

national parks, building roads and tourist facilities such as motels in the environs.²³ Where criticism of the Government's policy toward national parks arose, especially after plans to inundate Lake Pedder were announced, the Government relied upon statistical evidence for its defence. In 1968 Cashion was able to fend off attacks by noting that,

from the latest statistics available, Tasmania has a higher percentage of its area reserved as national park and scenery reserve than any other State in Australia.²⁴

The result had been achieved through the judicious exclusion of animal sanctuaries from the Minister's calculations but it was near enough the mark for a Government coming under increasing pressure from conservationist groups.²⁵

The Board's expanding national parks system and diversification into control of historic sites and bill boards after 1950 offered no challenge to the compass or progress of development. But, as a consequence of this very expansion, added pressure was placed upon the Board's already feeble administrative and financial resources. By the early 1960's the need for reform was pressing.

Mosely has noted that the S.P.B.'s administrative system had remained virtually unchanged since 1915.²⁶ In

the 1960's it was still an honorary body made up primarily of Department heads supported by a meagre administrative staff appropriated from the Lands Department. In fact the Scenery Preservation Act made the Board little more than an administrative appendage of Lands, a fact reinforced by the Surveyor General acting as both Statutory Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, controlling loan funds for scenery preservation.²⁷ The system was adequate until the Board's activities began to diversify and expand, particularly after 1950. Even at that stage problems had not arisen for Pitt's personal enthusiasm ensured close cooperation between the Lands Department and the S.P.B. in all matters.

With Pitt's death in 1953, E.D. Blackwood succeeded to the position of Surveyor General and became Chairman for two years and was followed by Frank Miles. Miles was a competent surveyor and able head of his Department, but was not of Pitt's calibre as Chairman of the S.P.B. It appears Miles resented the extra work load involved in administering the Board's activities and constantly thwarted attempts by its officers to implement policy and assert some independence from what had become a stifling relationship with the Lands Department.²⁸

Between 1958 and 1961 the situation became untenable for the Superintendent of Reserves, Michael Sharland, and his resignation in 1961 was the result of an administrative

crisis which had almost ended in a parliamentary enquiry.²⁹ Sharland had been a driving force behind the Board's activities since his appointment in 1947. A confirmed enthusiast for flora and fauna preservation he was poles apart for Miles, a bureaucrat resentful of the independence being asserted by his staff.³⁰ Sharland's resignation was the result of frustration he had experienced with attempts to administer the Defacement of Property Act and implement plans to develop recreational facilities in reserves.³¹

However, the essence of the problem was the increasingly stressful relationship between the Lands Department and the S.P.B. Sharland's resignation galvanized the Board into action. Changes to the Scenery Preservation Act were demanded which would grant the Board greater control over its staff and finances, increase the power of its rangers, allow for the election of the Chairman and permit the Superintendent of Reserves to act as the Board's Executive Officer.³² The crisis which had started as a personality clash had developed into a more general demand for the Board's independence from Lands, an independence commensurate with its growing importance.

After some prevarication the Government accepted the need for change and the long process of drafting new legislation was initiated. Jack Thwaites, a prominent bushwalker and representative of the Hobart Walking Club on

the Board since 1953 had succeeded Sharland as Superintendent of Reserves and was to play a key role in this process, Thwaites obtained examples of relevant legislation from the mainland Australian States, New Zealand and Canada upon which the Board's revised Act could be based.³³ Public support for reform of the Scenery Preservation Act was evident in 1964 when the Tasmanian Field Naturalists stated the Board should be given greater administrative autonomy, its staff and budget increased and in general its status raised. If this were achieved, the Field Naturalists envisaged the Board functioning along similar lines to the National Parks Service of the U.S.A.³⁴

By 1966 it appeared that such aspirations may have some hope of being realised. Legislation had been drafted which expanded the Board's powers, provided for the election rather than statutory appointment of the Chairman, and created the position of Director of National Parks who was to be responsible to the Board acting as its Senior Executive Officer. In 1966 an equally important indicator of the Board's increasing status was provided when it moved to new headquarters at 161 Davey Street in Hobart, itself an historic site.³⁵ It was a significant physical and psychological break with the Lands Department, a new identity appeared to be in the making. However, such hopes for an uncomplicated future bringing increased status were ill founded.

A storm was brewing in which the forces of development united behind the goals of hydro-industrialisation would clash with a newly emergent conservation movement: politically aggressive and eager to assert its ecocentric values within the community at large. In such a polarized atmosphere the Board could not remain a bystander. The central issue was management of the State's South-West and in particular plans to flood Lake Pedder National Park, proclaimed on the Board's recommendation in 1955.

The South-West, as it has become known encompasses nearly one quarter of the State. It is bounded in the north, by the Lyell Highway and, in the east, by the Derwent, Florentine and Huon Valleys and the South Coast Range. The idea of a reserve in the area had been raised as early as 1947, when a resolution was passed at the Annual Conference of the Country Women's Association, which suggested that a 'National Reserve' be proclaimed encompassing the whole of the State's South-Western corner.³⁶

The idea was a novel one but thoughts of a reserve in the region lapsed until 1954 when the Hobart Walking Club approached the Board with a proposal suggesting proclamation of an area around Lake Pedder.³⁷ The Club's proposal

stressed the area's scenic beauty, its accessibility by light plane, and, defensively the fact that, 'it was of no economic potential, there being only scarce stunted trees and no indication of payable minerals.'³⁸ At a subsequent meeting, having viewed lantern-slides of the area, and informed of the danger of indiscriminate firing around the lake to the native flora, the Board was supportive of the Club's proposals.³⁹ Sir Allan Knight however, raised an important concern. He pointed out that the H.E.C. were considering building a dam, near the junction of the Serpentine and Gordon River, which would probably flood a good part of the Serpentine Valley. In delineating the boundaries of the proposed reserve, Knight stressed that this should be taken into account, so that potential criticisms of the H.E.C. could be avoided. Knight's warnings were heeded and in the plan drawn up for the proposed reserve the lower Serpentine Valley was excluded.⁴⁰ These were the limits of the H.E.C.'s territorial ambitions in 1954. Mines and Forestry were not opposed to the proposition. The H.E.C., reiterated Knight's comments reassuring the Board that no development was considered likely in the next twenty years and therefore offered no objection to the reserve.⁴¹ In March 1955 the 59,000 acre Lake Pedder National Park was proclaimed.

Knight's actions at this stage warrant closer attention. Southwell looking back on the 'Lake Pedder Saga'

has offered a distorted interpretation of Knight's attitudes. In his Mountains of Paradise, Southwell characterises Knight and his cohorts in the upper echelons of the H.E.C. as philistines who,

showed little aesthetic awareness of the South-West nor indeed of any values beyond the prospect of power generation.⁴²

Southwell's analysis follows the path first tentatively trodden by Shackel in the late 1960's and reflects the same bushwalker-conservationist / anti- conservationist mode of analysis. His emotional vision of a monolithic and Machiavellian anti- conservationist bloc is based upon unfortunate misrepresentation compounded by factual error. The view of a manipulative Knight, was reinforced by the erroneous belief that he was actually Chairman of the Board in 1954 when these plans were being formulated.⁴³ The truth is that in 1954, E.D. Blackwood and not Knight was Chairman of the S.P.B.⁴⁴

The situation clearly demands some redress. In Knight, one perceives that uneasy amalgam of technocentrism and ecocentrism of which the Board itself was the bureaucratic expression. When faced with a decision such as that concerning Lake Pedder, the core values of development governed action, subordinating ecocentrist elements. In later years, Knight would claim along with others of his ilk

such as Reece, that opening up the South-West would benefit scenic values, rather than operate to their detriment.⁴⁵ The moulding and domination of Nature by Man provided the highest level of human attainment for these individuals. Such sentiment was genuine, but as events were to disclose, sadly out of step with the times. Powerful new forces in society were demanding that coexistence, rather than domination, should be the mark of Man's relationship with Nature.

Having recommended proclamation of the Lake Pedder National Park, the Board showed little interest in the area other than in the provision of basic amenities for visitors. The Board's somnolence in this regard was not reflected in other quarters. Since the early 1950's the H.E.C. had been investigating the potential of the area for hydro development. By 1962 Reece was able to confidently announce that plans for the development of the Gordon River would make it the State's foremost power producing area and, "...a lake country comparable with any in the world."⁴⁶

Plans such as these prompted Ron Brown, then Deputy President of the Legislative Council, to propose in 1962 that the South-West be proclaimed a national park. His suggestion was virtually ignored by Government, but led to the formation of a group calling itself the South-West Committee, which was to campaign for Brown's proposal,

pushing for co-ordinated development and conservation in the region.⁴⁷

The establishment of the South-West Committee marks a significant moment, for it represents an early manifestation of the modern conservation movement. There is no definite point at which the proto-conservationists were succeeded by their modern counterparts, rather, one may perceive the modern environmentalist assuming a higher profile as the 1960's progressed. Davis has described the conservation movement as a loose amalgam of concerned individuals, initially naive and amateurish in their approach, but becoming better organized and more militant as time progressed. The South-West became their focus of attention, the Lake Pedder debate their crucible.⁴⁸

In 1964 when proposals reached the Board for a South-West national park its reaction was guarded. Proclamation of such a large area was considered premature, and in any case would be difficult to police. Instead, the Board recommended to the Minister that a committee of those Departments involved in development of the South-West, (Forestry, Mines, the H.E.C. and S.P.B.) be formed so as to ensure scenic and tourist values in the area could be protected.⁴⁹ The Board's recommendation was a logical compromise, an attempt by the members to reconcile the demands of development with the needs of scenery

preservation. The idea was readily accepted by the Government and the Inter-Departmental Committee was formed in 1965 with Miles representing the Board and Knight the H.E.C.⁵⁰

Application for membership of the Inter-Departmental Committee by the South-West Committee was refused by the Government.⁵¹ In 1966 it released its own detailed plan for the South-West, envisaging the creation of a huge national park with zoned wilderness and tourist development areas.⁵² The divergence of opinions on management of the South-West was becoming clearer. Events in 1967 finally transformed what had been a simmering disagreement into open conflict.

Partly in response to the South-West Committee's proposal in April of that year, the Inter-Departmental Committee released its own plans for the South-West. It recommended the creation of a new scenic reserve, having taken into account the mineral, forestry and hydro potential of the area. The reserve, it was argued, would be easily accessible through newly constructed roads and incorporate a scenically spectacular huge lake.⁵³ In May the Board accepted the proposal and with it paved the way for approval of the inundation of Lake Pedder.⁵⁴ Finally proclaimed in 1968, the South West National Park was only about one third the size of that sought by the South-West Committee. Knight's role in this had been central, he was both Chairman

of the Inter-Departmental Committee and the H.E.C.'s representative on the Board. The compromise he forged was an expression of the reconciliation of technocentrism and ecocentrism, at both a personal and bureaucratic level.

In May 1967 the H.E.C. tabled its report on the Gordon River power development in Parliament, outlining plans for the creation of a new Lake Gordon and an enlarged Lake Pedder. The public furore which erupted was unprecedented in Tasmania's history. Under a cloud of increasing public criticism the Government used its majority to force authorizing legislation through the House. Conservationist ire was further raised when, in June, Reece announced that the H.E.C. was to be given temporary control over the entire South-West.⁵⁵ The H.E.C. became the target for increasing criticism, even the Mercury's editorial questioned whether the H.E.C. or the Government was running the State.⁵⁶

Public pressure was such that, when the legislation reached the Upper House, it was forced before a Select Committee. The Report handed down found that the flooding of Lake Pedder was unavoidable, but launched a scathing attack upon the existing system of national parks management, and with it the S.P.B. A new system of rational conservation was called for which would reflect changing community attitudes towards the preservation of natural environment. The Report recommended that the S.P.B. be

scrapped and that a new authority under the control of a full time Director be established.⁵⁷

The 1967 Report sounded the death knell for the S.P.B. Conservationists were demanding the creation of a new authority, free of Departmental or H.E.C. influence and responsible for the protection of the national parks and wildlife.⁵⁸ Since 1928 fauna protection had been left in the hands of the Animal and Birds Protection Board, a separately constituted body, run along similar lines to the S.P.B.⁵⁹ For its part, the Reece Government was eager to placate what had become an electorally significant tide of public criticism.

The S.P.B. became the Government's scapegoat. In 1968 a National Parks and Conservation Bill, designed to create a new Board under the control of a full-time Director responsible to the Minister, was presented to Parliament.⁶⁰ The Board's response to the Government initiative was tinged with bitterness. It was patently clear that the Government was intent upon replacing the Board with a new organization. Resentment was expressed that its valuable work was being ignored.⁶¹

However, the Board's sentiments were not echoed in the community at large. The Mercury reflected a general consensus when it stated.

The obsequies of the old S.P.B. will attract few mourners, it has long since ceased to function with the energy of its younger days. But merely appointing another in its place will solve nothing unless the new Board can produce new drive and new ideas.⁶²

Debate on the Government's new legislation was cut short in 1969 when Reece called a general election. The result was a shock defeat for Labor bringing the Liberals under Angus Bethune to power in a fragile coalition with Kevin Lyons' self-styled Centre Party. The Liberals had played upon Labor's alienation of the conservation vote over the Lake Pedder issue, offering the electorate a vague conservationism.⁶³ On gaining office, the Liberals quickly turned their attention to national parks legislation. In July 1969, Bethune announced that the Government intended to have a single national parks and wildlife service and that preparation of suitable legislation was underway.⁶³ By February 1970 Cabinet had approved, in principle, proposals for the integrated control of the State's national parks and wildlife.⁶⁵

The National Parks and Wildlife Bill created considerable public interest in the community. Modeled closely upon the N.S.W. statute, it created a new Government Department under the control of a Director assisted by an Advisory Council.⁶⁶ The conservationists saw in the move a

break with the old system administered by the S.P.B., where decision making had been compromised by the conflicting interests of Departmental representatives, and conservation undervalued. In this sense, the envisaged National Parks and Wildlife Service was seen as the bureaucratic expression of conservationist values, and likely to be more effective in promoting those values in the policy making process than the S.P.B. was perceived to have been.

After 1967 the S.P.B. had continued to function much as before, considering leases, managing the Defacement of Property Act and the national parks system for which it was responsible. And yet there was an unmistakable air of bitterness generated by the treatment it had received. It had supported its Government during the Lake Pedder debate seeing power development in the South West as a wise decision,⁶⁷ only to be condemned for its actions by conservationists and then abandoned by developmentalists.

In April 1971, Peter Murrell was appointed as Director of the State's new National Parks and Wildlife Service.⁶⁸ Murrell had served as Assistant Conservator of Forests in Kenya, and had also held a high position in the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service.⁶⁹ The Mercury headline read "Parks Man Ready To Fight The Despoilers". The comment was apt, Murrell committed himself to a tough stand on environmental issues stating, "I think it inevitable there

will be conflicts between our authority and others such as the H.E.C."⁷⁰

It was the beginning of a new era in national parks administration in the State, the S.P.B. was quickly forgotten as new problems began to assert themselves. However the conflict between development and conservation remains eternal, perhaps in the lessons of the past a road for the future may emerge.

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Conclusion:

In October 1971, the S.P.B. met for the last time. It was a chance to look back into the past, and also to peer into the future. Pride was expressed in the Board's many achievements: the acquisition and subsequent restoration of Port Arthur and Entally House, administration of the Defacement of Property Act, and the establishment of the State's magnificent national parks. There was a sense of regret that the Board had never had adequate funds or staff at its disposal, thus making it impossible to give full effect to policies and recommendations. But hope was felt for the future as the fruits of the S.P.B.'s efforts were embodied in the machinery of a professional and independent National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Underlying these mixed emotions was a sense of shame that somehow the Board had failed. The Lake Pedder issue had left the Board ridiculed by the conservationists and deserted by the Government. The cause for this lay in their inability to effectively reconcile under stress the conflicting values of conservation and development.

They had faced this impossible task with courage and honesty; their rejection left them bemused and embittered. Their tragedy was encapsulated in a statement by Harold Payne, the Forestry's representative on the Board since

1948, when he likened himself to a 'handcuffed volunteer'. As individuals the Board members were volunteers in the cause of scenery preservation, receiving little more than scant regard for their efforts. Yet ultimately, as individuals and as a bureaucratic body they remained handcuffed to the development ethos, their success and ultimately their demise due to this fact. It will remain for history to judge if their successors will become little more than handcuffed professionals.

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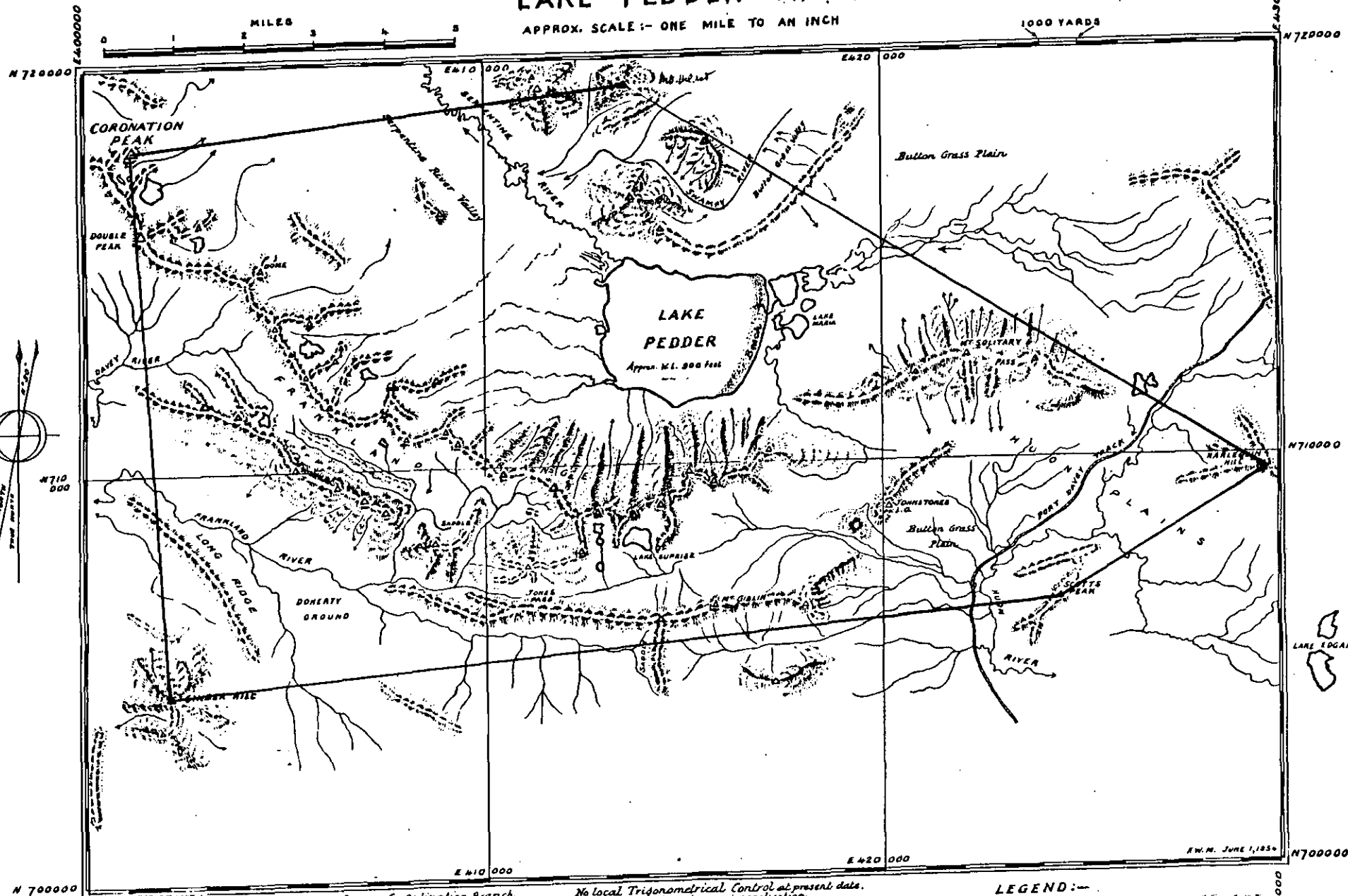
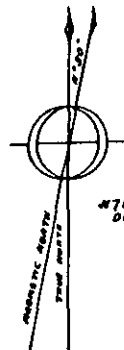
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Compiled and drawn by the Survey Co-Ordination Branch of the Department of Lands and Surveys, Hobart, 1954, from Aerial Photographs, and from other available National Grid information supplied by Mr. R. Smith, Civil Engineer, Hydro Electric Commission, Tasmania.

The Co-ordinates surround may be used for Map Reference purposes in respect of this particular sketch plan, but such values will not be correct for other parts of the National Grid.

No local Trigonometrical Control at present date.
Sketch drawn to portray a generalisation
of the approximate relative position of
some of the topography in the vicinity of
Lake Pedder, for Nomenclature and
general purposes.

Area covered by Co-Ordinate surround:- Approx. 200 sq. miles.

LEGEND:—

RIDGE TOP..... 

PEAKS AND PROMINENT, AND HIGHEST, POINTS... Δ
(RESPECTIVE OF COMPARATIVE HEIGHTS).

LAKES HAVE BEEN DRAWN ACCORDING
TO THEIR APPROXIMATE SIZE AND SHAPE.

MAJOR RESERVES IN TASMANIA

