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"The Paradox of Discourse Concerning Deforestation in New Zealand: A Historical Survey"

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Knight, Catherine. "The Paradox of Discourse Concerning Deforestation in New Zealand: A Historical Survey." *Environment and History* 15, no. 3 (Aug., 2009): 323–42. doi:10.3197/096734009X12474738213235 . When the European settlement of New Zealand began in earnest in the mid-nineteenth century, the landscape too underwent a dramatic transformation. Much of the forest was destroyed by milling and fire, and the land converted to pasture for farming. While seen by many as firmly within the prevailing 'doctrine of progress,' this transformation was viewed with misgivings by others, who observed how deforestation led to erosion and floods, and advocated more prudent forest management. This paper explores the historical discourse on deforestation around the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries and how it contrasts with the recent discourse following major floods in 2004, in which the discussion of deforestation as an underlying cause of floods and erosion is notable in its very absence. This paper will seek to explain the paradox apparent in the development of New Zealanders' understanding of the connection between deforestation and the devastating flood events and severe erosion occurring in New Zealand today. While this is a connection that was repeatedly and cogently expressed by our forebears over one hundred years ago, it is one that most New Zealanders today are ignorant of. All rights reserved. © 2009 The White Horse Press

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