

## Forest grab

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by government of allowing oil exploration of the public's 200,000 hectare Victoria Forest Park in northern Westland is environmentally and morally wrong. Revealing the indifference of government to

environmental quality was that Energy Minister Simon Bridges admitted publicly he had never heard of the Victoria Forest Park. Yet he approved of the the move. Worse still Prime Minister Key has backed Bridges and the move.

Deeply disturbing is government's attitude to public lands that do not belong to Key, Bridges, the Cabinet or government but to all New Zealanders. The Victoria Park is not only a scenic and environmental asset but a public recreational one with sightseeing, trekking, tramping, trout fishing, hunting, driving and all other outdoor pursuits. There should be nothing but contempt for not just any exploitation-driven speculators but politicians and governments who seemingly without any conscience are seizing public lands.

This should be to the fore of the public's mind as they face the ballot box on September 20 and a consequence for any government committing

public lands to private exploiters.

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