

some simpler machinery was necessary to more effectively carry out the purposes of the Act, and accordingly an amending Act was passed by Parliament terminating the Commission and substituting a small permanent Board of Government officials consisting of the Surveyor-General, the head of the Tourist Department, and the Commissioner of Crown Lands for each land district, to investigate and report from time to time on all areas worthy of inspection. This body, known as "The Scenery Preservation Board," acts as an advisory Board to the Government, and reports on all cases of suggested reservations. Its recommendations are carefully considered and submitted for final decision to the Government, with such supplementary remarks and recommendations as are needed in each case. By the Act of 1903, a special vote towards the expenses of purchasing and dealing with lands required for scenic purposes appears in the annual appropriations, and a statement of accounts showing how the money has been expended accompanies the annual report on scenery preservation laid on the table of both Houses every year, Schedule A of which contains the scenic reservations for the year just ended.

It will thus be seen that very complete arrangements have been made for adequately dealing with this most important matter, and Schedule B of this report contains a list of all lands that have to the present time been reserved for scenic purposes either under the Land Act, the Scenery Preservation Act, or any other enactment of the General Assembly, whilst Schedules C and D show the recommendations of the late Commission and present Board, and the action taken in each case.

But when considering this subject, as stated in the earlier portions of this report, the various points from which scenery preservation is viewed must be taken into account and due weight attached to arguments brought forward in support thereof. The sawmiller is naturally anxious that every convenient area of forest trees should be converted into sawn timber. The farmer regards the land upon which forest timber is growing as being well adapted, when cleared and cultivated, for the support of his family and the extension of settlement with which New Zealand's prosperity is so bound up, and he is supported by the local bodies within whose district the land is situated, as they naturally prefer to have as much rateable property as possible within the boundaries of the county or district whose roads, bridges, &c., they have to maintain. The tourist and visitor from other parts of the colony urges that all beautiful pieces of scenery should be preserved from an æsthetic point of view, and deploras the vandalism that sacrifices sentiment to settlement. And the Government in weighing the diversified opinions from so many different members of the community has to exercise a judicious care not to run into extremes in any direction.

However, the general principles underlying the matter are considered to be as follows: Most of the attractive regions of New Zealand are adjacent to the main routes of travel, and it is to the proper preservation of the varied scenery therein that the greatest attention has to be paid. When this has been accomplished, areas more remote from the centres of population can be safeguarded and developed. Crown lands unsuitable for close settlement but well adapted for scenic conservation can be, and are, reserved at the very first opportunity as no cost is involved, but when it becomes necessary to purchase lands from Native or European owners, the available funds as appropriated by Parliament are devoted primarily to the acquisition of lands nearest to the main routes of railways and traffic. It must be clearly understood that it has never been the practice of the Department to unduly withhold from settlement areas of rich soil and well adapted for pastoral or agricultural pursuits merely because they are also suited for scenic reservation. The needs of settlement are imperative, and it is only when they have been amply met and provided for that comparatively small portions of land specially attractive in scenic appearance, and usually somewhat poor in quality or rugged in character, are set aside as an endeavour to preserve the native fauna and flora in that locality. This probably accounts for the extremely slight opposition that has ever been made to the reserves in question, and it is generally recognised that a wise selection has been made in the size and boundaries of the areas set apart.

Where small areas of forest situated close to large centres of population are recommended for reservation, the principle has been laid down that the local residents should show their *bona fides* in desiring to preserve the land by contributing a certain proportion of the total sum involved, either by private subscription or by means of a subsidy from a local authority or by the proceeds of public meetings or entertainments. The Government supply the balance of money required, and it is believed the residents will take additional pride in the reserve by remembering their individual efforts and help in securing the land which has now become the inalienable property of the inhabitants of New Zealand and a continued source of pleasure to themselves.

But to enter into details. Since the Act of 1903 was put into operation, the following amounts have been paid by way of compensation for land acquired:—

	£	s.	d.
1904-5
1905-6
1906-7
	£11,408	5	11

whilst the expenses of the late Commission and miscellaneous valuations surveys, travelling and legal expenses, &c., amounted to £1,873 17s. 3d. in 1904-5; to £1,748 17s. 11d. in 1905-6; but since the complete control of the work has been handed over to the Department of Lands and new Scenery Preservation Board the expenses are only £1,290 16s. 11d. for the past year. This is accounted for by the fact that the many reports and inspections required have in nearly all instances been made by the officers of the Department in the course of their ordinary duties, thus entailing no extra expense, whilst the bulk of the surveys can also be effected by the staff surveyors engaged on other work in the neighbourhood.