

Some criticism is from time to time expressed in certain quarters to the effect that the Department is inclined to set aside as scenic reserves lands that should be made available for settlement. Such criticism rests on very slender foundations. Very little country capable of being economically developed has been reserved, and then only because of some special features of interest of sufficient value to warrant such areas being permanently set aside for the public benefit. In fact, it can safely be said that in many districts it would have been much more to the advantage of settlement in the truest sense if large areas which have proved extremely difficult to keep in grass had been retained under their forest cover and set apart as permanent reserves.

In last year's report reference was made to certain unformed roads on the banks of the Tahakopa River, in South Otago, having been declared Government roads with a view to the better preservation of the beautiful growth of kowhais and other trees thereon. During the year now under review the adjoining owners and the County Council have been circularized advising them of the action taken and seeking their co-operation in the protection of the bush.

The Ranger on Stewart Island reports that he visited as many reserves as possible during the year, and that in his opinion the native birds are holding their own very well on the island. The weather during the summer was exceptionally severe, and heavily flooded streams hampered inspection work to a considerable extent.

FUTURE OPERATIONS.

A good many Crown areas have been listed for reservation in the near future, and will doubtless prove valuable additions to the Dominion's scenic reserves. It may be taken for granted that any Crown lands of scenic value will be set apart under the Scenery Preservation Act, but only very limited progress can be expected in the direction of the acquisition of privately owned scenic properties until such time as the Department is given an adequate vote for the purpose. The amount expended on scenery preservation throughout the Dominion during the year covered by this report was £5,077, but of that amount no less than £720 was spent on the Waitangi Endowment area and £346 on the maintenance and improvement of the Trounson Kauri Park. The expenditure on Waitangi especially is a heavy drag on scenic funds. The position is that under present conditions the Department is expected to make an effective vote of barely £4,000 per annum suffice for the fencing and maintenance of existing reserves and the purchase of new areas. It will therefore be realized that it is impossible under these conditions to put into operation any long-range plan for the acquisition of private areas, and that the most that can be done in any one year is to purchase a few areas of limited monetary value.

APPENDICES.

The appendices to this report are listed hereunder :—

- A. Schedule of reserves made and reservations revoked during the year, together with a statement of expenditure.
- B. An account of the work carried out on Kapiti Island.