

Preservation of Special Areas in State - owned Indigenous Forests

AT the last meeting of the Society's National Council Mr R. C. Nelson, the National President, made the following comments about the remaining indigenous forests in New Zealand:

AS a rough figure there are about 14,000,000 acres of indigenous forests or forested lands remaining in New Zealand. Of these not more than 2,000,000 acres can be called commercial stands, and of those perhaps only about 1,300,000 acres are fully productive. Of the fully productive forests probably 80 percent are State owned, the remainder being privately owned.

There is no control over privately owned commercial forest cutting, except that if milling of a forest is considered likely to cause immediate erosion, milling can be forbidden by the Soil Erosion and Rivers Control Council, but in these circumstances the owners are entitled to full compensation for the loss of cutting rights, a formidable consideration from the Government's point of view.

The State-owned commercial forests will be made to last as long as possible, but ultimately these forests are listed for cutting and will be felled. In general they will be replaced by exotics, with the exception of comparatively small areas of kauri forest in which selective felling takes place and regeneration is encouraged, some beech forests, and also some areas of podocarp forest on the West Coast where the land is not suitable for exotics. Elsewhere, cleared indigenous forest areas not replanted with exotics are to be handed to the Department of Lands and Survey for development as farms.

This is Government policy and the New Zealand Forest Service must carry it out—with the following possible exceptions. Forests which might be classed as unique, having unusual plant associations or rare plants, or forested areas in districts where no other indigenous forests exist might be set aside as reserves, perhaps as botanical sanctuaries, forest parks, or other form of reserve. It is in this connection that I request special interest by members. Generally it is

too late to protest when the Forest Service has authorised cutting in some particular stand, but it is willing to consider any representations to have special areas preserved if sufficient reasons can be produced. Will all interested therefore make a point of looking over all State forests not already reserved with the view of having special areas preserved; where good reasons can be shown for preservation the Forest Service will give them careful consideration. Each case will be treated on its merits, but now is the time to start looking about. Reasons for preservation must be sound and must be more substantial than simply that an area is of native bush.

At present forested areas are estimated to be as follows:

| | Million acres |
|---|---------------|
| Total forested area | 15.465 |
| Exotic forests | 1.3 |
| Indigenous forests | 14.1 |
| Merchantable indigenous timber | 1.3 |
| Merchantable indigenous and exotic timber | 2.665 |

Non-merchantable timber stands are as follows:

| | Million acres |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Approximate total | 11.5 |
| State owned (Forest Service) | 5.3 |
| Maori owned | .8 |
| Other freehold | 1.6 |
| Unoccupied Crown Lands | 1.4 |
| In national parks and reserves | 2.4 |

It is estimated that the area of national parks and reserves is 5.68 million acres. In this area indigenous timber occupies 2.4 million acres and of this merchantable timber occupies 200,000 acres.

There are six forest parks functioning as such, though all are not yet gazetted. These cover about 1.7 million acres.

Protection forests not in parks or reserves total about 4.5 million acres of non-productible forest.

