

Dominion and visiting botanists and other scientists and enthusiasts have strongly condemned any attempt towards converting Waipoua Forest from a wild forest, with the attendant waste by decay of wood material, to a useful forest from which mature wood material would be usefully availed of by human economy. The making use of Nature's surplus wood from dead kauri-trees alone has been regarded with horror by those enthusiasts. The old, wasteful mode of exploiting kauri forests by clear-felling them on a face, followed inevitably by firing, has been specifically applied as synonymous with the forester's system of selecting only a few trees for removal, working as closely as possible with Nature, and above all maintaining the forest as a living green forest of trees at all stages of development. Similarly, areas partially treated silviculturally have been erroneously termed "cut-over" areas, doomed to destruction by fire as under the old system of ruthless-exploitation and abandonment.

The argument that "nothing can improve on Nature" can only be regarded as fantastic, more especially when applied to the whole Waipoua area of 40,000 acres. Indeed, in the field of agriculture it should be obvious to all that civilization would never have progressed to its present stage and standards of living if the human race had been forced to subsist on wild crops alone. The man-made improvements on wild wheat is but one instance of careful culture, selection, and breeding leading to greater productivity, higher yields, and, perhaps above all, the production of ample supplies on a minimum land area. Improvements in productivity, yields, and land use have likewise been secured in the field of forestry, outstanding instances being found in the coniferous and broad-leaf forests of Europe and in the teak forests of Burma.

Preservation of forest flora in the primitive state is nevertheless catered for in other lands, and this has been the Forest Service policy respecting Waipoua since the Service's inception, when the area to be so locked up was set at 1,000 acres. The original working plan of 1941 continued this policy, and the lock-up area at present provided for of 7,200 acres of all types of vegetation, including 2,800 acres of kauri, most of it heavy kauri, is regarded by the Service as more than ample for all purposes and allowing for all contingencies. Indeed, it is confidently anticipated that at a future date foresters will be asked to rehabilitate parts of this large wilderness area.

To lock up 40,000 acres, however, as a plant museum or "tree cemetery" would be regarded by the Service and a large body of its supporters as fantastically wasteful of land and natural resources. This view was supported by the findings of the Empire Forestry Conference held in London in 1947—namely, "Where large areas of land are allocated for watershed protection or national parks, there should be no prohibition of the practice of scientific forestry, provided that it is consistent with the primary objects of management." The report adds that such prohibition may endanger the perpetuation of the forest.

Locking up the whole area would, moreover, constitute a lost opportunity of putting to human use the growth of kauri and other wood while gradually improving the vigour of the forest and maintaining it in a living green condition in perpetuity. The art and science of forestry has achieved such a thing in numerous forest types abroad and in both temperate and tropical zones. The concept of perpetuity is admittedly relative: over the centuries Nature is apt to exert a tendency towards changes in plant succession which frankly would, if allowed free play, upset the forester's husbandry. But foresters are ever on the watch for such trends and are, like the agriculturists and horticulturists, equipped by art and science to assist Nature towards pulling in the desired direction. Briefly, this is achieved by change or partial change in silvicultural system, by favouring certain secondary plant species, &c.

It can be accepted as certain that, if there is a tendency for such long-range natural influences to exert themselves, the changes will be more rapid in a locked-up, primeval forest than in one under the care of foresters. Of all the kauri species, essentially denizens