

It is impossible at this comparatively late period, when nearly all the most suitable and accessible forest country has been alienated from the Crown, to give effect to a general forest-conservation scheme applicable to this land district, and, I may say, essential to the well-being and prosperity of the community.

Objects of Conservation.—The objects sought to be attained by the aforesaid forest-conservation proposals of 1881 include the following :—

- (1.) The conservation of springs at the sources of the principal rivers and streams to insure the maintenance of the water-supply of the country.
- (2.) The prevention of the degradation of the surface of the mountains and deposit of detritus in the valleys.
- (3.) To insure the gradual distribution of rainfall, avoidance of the rapid descent of storm-waters and consequent sudden high floods more disastrous than those heretofore experienced.
- (4.) To maintain the climatic equilibrium, and to protect the native flora and fauna.
- (5.) In the low country, to conserve scenic effect and shelter; and by preserving the forest and scrub along the rivers and streams to also maintain the banks of the latter.
- (6.) To meet the economic and domestic requirements of the people.
- (7.) It was also proposed to reserve low coasts and tracts of country where protective planting might be necessary to fix sand-dunes.
- (8.) Lapse of time and inroads upon the available milling-timber appear to point to the necessity for the acquisition of areas of country suitable for reforestation.

Resumption or Acquisition of Forest Lands.—The question as to whether the State would be justified in acquiring extensive blocks of the remaining waste forests, whether in the hands of Europeans or Natives, and isolated clumps of bush which beautify and make the colony attractive, is submitted as worthy of consideration. The preservation of forest and scrub alongside rivers in the upper reaches, in cañons and mountain gorges, demands attention, especially where the Crown has alienated the lands. For unique beauty this latter class of scenery is unsurpassed, and its preservation is an essential factor in the determination of the tourist traffic of the future, the importance of which is already realised. The proposal of resumption is beset by serious but not insurmountable difficulties, particularly as it can be demonstrated that it is fraught with issues vital to the welfare of the nation. Viewed in this light individual might be expected to give way to the common interests.

<i>Proposals.</i> —To supplement the aforesaid forest reserves of	...	...	285,731 acres
it is recommended that the following be added : Surveyed lands, 41,786 acres ;			
unsurveyed lands, 323,899 acres	...	...	365,685 "
Total	...	...	651,416 "
In addition it is recommended that the following lands be held back from sale :			
Surveyed sections, 26,942 acres ; unsurveyed lands, 170,345 acres	...		197,287 "

Making a total area of ... 848,703 "

Particulars as to the above 562,972 acres additional lands are set forth in the attached schedules. This area is made up of 68,728 acres of surveyed Crown lands weighted with £15,237 6s. 5d. loading for roads to open up the sections and £414 17s. for improvements effected by former lessees. The balance of 494,244 acres comprises unsurveyed Crown land weighted with £2,894 17s. 2d. for road-works to open up the blocks. It will be seen from inspection of the schedules that the 68,728 acres include forfeited and undisposed-of sections scattered through the various settlements, the main object of their conservation being to provide timber for constructive and domestic purposes and to preserve scenery.

The unsurveyed Crown lands proposed to be conserved or held back from sale are likewise distributed throughout the length and breadth of the Wellington Land District wherever lands are still under the control of the Crown. The principal blocks and localities are as follows :—

The National Park on Tongariro, Ngauruhoe, and Ruapehu being inadequate in area, it is proposed to extend the limits of the same so as to embrace the whole of the Crown lands on the western and southern slopes and plains to the westward of these mountains, in order to conserve the whole of the country down to the proposed North Island Main Trunk line of railway for some distance northward and southward of Waimarino Plains, and also to include some of the forest lands westward of the said railway-line. This addition, roughly speaking, comprises about 100,000 acres. On the eastern side of these mountains the Crown has acquired blocks of land amounting in area to 13,730 acres, which are included in my proposals for the extension of the National Park. I have come to the conclusion that the National Park should ultimately include the whole of the country from Lake Taupo southward to the Murimotu Plains, being bounded, roughly speaking, on the western and eastern sides by the two great railway and road routes from Waiouru to Taumarunui on the one side and to Tokaanu on the other. Though a large proportion of the country thus indicated is still in the hands of the aboriginal owners, it would be well to take a broad view of such an important subject. It may be necessary, by means of special legislation, to give effect to proposals which would adequately meet the requirements of the colony.

Kaimanawa and Ruahine Ranges.—The proposals include the conservation of 45,146 acres on the Kaimanawa at the head of the Rangitikei River, being the whole of the available Crown lands in that locality. It is also proposed to conserve the remaining Crown lands on the western slopes of the Ruahine Ranges from the head of the Kawhatau River southward to the Manawatu Gorge. This will involve the conservation of about 70,000 acres of country lying at the back of the various settlements, and should be supplemented by the acquisition of the intervening Maori lands.