

It is rare to find a unanimous expression of opinion amongst those residing near a reserve as to whether it should be uplifted or the contrary, but generally a strong and possibly a biased plea is put forth on both sides of the question. In any case, it must not be forgotten that any scenic reserve is not merely constituted for the benefit of those in its immediate vicinity, but also for the people of New Zealand as a whole. For example, a reserve of virgin kauri forest is really of less moment for the neighbouring settlers than it is for those further to the south who have never seen a kauri-tree growing naturally.

The scenic reserves which have been set up at the instance of the Scenery Preservation Board have not been constituted such without a thorough examination as to their necessity. They are not proclaimed offhand; on the contrary, a considerable period must elapse between the suggestion of an area for reservation and its being finally gazetted. Further, in no few instances have they been created at the instigation of the settlers in the neighbourhood.

Another class of scenic reserve is, however, constituted in a manner different from the above. At present, and for some considerable time past, there has been a standing order that a Government surveyor, when cutting up forest land for settlement, must set aside at stated intervals small areas as scenic reserves. This procedure, though undoubtedly admirable in theory, is, unfortunately, not always a success in practice. The piece selected may occupy extremely good land; it may be in a position required for building-sites, roads, &c.; it may abut on the property of one quite unsympathetic as to scenery or preservation of plant and animals, and who would fain use the reserve as grazing-ground for his stock. Further, the wholesale and necessary burning of the newly settled forest-area makes it very difficult even for the most sympathetic to avoid letting his fires encroach on one or other of the small reserves. Once the fire enters the forest the trees are more exposed to wind, the danger from a fire is much increased, and on the now bare ground weeds can gain a foothold. A reserve such as described soon becomes worthless for its specific object and a menace to the adjoining farm lands. Happily not many cases such as the above have come under our notice.

With regard to the question of uplifting scenic reserves in the future, we are of opinion that no reserve should be uplifted without there being the strongest possible reason for so doing, and that in considering any special case the following points be taken into consideration: (1.) Is the reserve valuable from the scenic standpoint? (2.) Does it represent some special type of vegetation of which there are few or no examples in existing reserves? (3.) Does it mark some important historic spot? (4.) Does it afford a haven of refuge for some specially rare plant or animal? (5.) Has the agitation for its uplifting arisen from some one or more of the neighbouring settlers wanting the land for himself or themselves? (6.) Does it harbour noxious weeds, and, if so, does it contain more than the adjoining lands? (7.) Is its upkeep, owing to necessary eradication of such weeds, too great to warrant its retention? (8.) Has it been so much damaged by fire as to no longer fulfil its original object?

The reserves now set aside for scenery purposes number 518, which belong to the following distinct categories: (1.) Reserves gazetted under the Scenery Preservation Act and the Public Works Act up to the end of the year 1911-12, 262. Reserves of this class are inalienable, and are also sanctuaries for the fauna and flora. (2.) Reserves for scenery under the Land Act and the Public Reserves Act up to the end of the year 1906-7, 256.

There are also five national parks, viz.: The Tongariro, the Egmont, the Waimakariri, the Mount Cook, and the Otago Sounds. These parks, although of considerable extent, consist for the most part of extremely steep land, much of which is at a high altitude and altogether barren. There are also three islands set apart for the protection of the New Zealand birds, viz.: The Little Barrier Island, Kapiti Island, and Resolution Island. Finally, a considerable portion of Stewart Island has been set aside as a reserve for the fauna and flora, the whole of the area as it is at present being without any agricultural value.