

REPORT OF CONSERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY FOR THE 11 MONTHS ENDED 31 MAY, 1969

Road alignment at Arthurs Pass

On learning that the Ministry of Works were considering re-aligning the road over Arthurs Pass, the Society wrote to the District Commissioner of Works at Christchurch, pointing out the importance and location of permanent transects laid down by Dr. L. Cockayne and Mr. J. A. Calder in the 1930s. The Commissioner's reply was that he would be "largely guided" by the opinions of the Arthurs Pass National Park Board, which is fully aware of the significance of the transects.

Ultrabasic areas

(a) The Society has been concerned at the spread of pines into the native vegetation of the Mineral Belt on Dun Mountain. It recently received a tentative offer to organise removal of the trees, but because of conflicting reports about the magnitude of the task, considers that the area should first, and urgently, be properly inspected. The Society has requested the Nature Conservation Council to take the matter up with the appropriate authorities.

(b) The Society has written to the Minister of Science, requesting a survey of the serpentine areas of north-west Fiordland, so that features of scientific interest are recognised and protected before they are threatened by mining activities.

Prospecting and mining in National Parks and scenic reserves

The report of the Mineral Resources Committee, which is included in the report of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research for the year ended 31st March 1968, appears to contain an indirectly worded plea for relaxation of safeguards for conservation where mining activities are proposed in National Parks and scenic reserves. The Society therefore expressed its opposition to any such changes in a letter to the Minister of Science.

Manapouri power project

The Society wrote to the Nature Conservation Council, supporting its continued opposition to proposed changes in the level of Lake Manapouri, to the siting of the Te Anau control structure and to proposed minimal standards of shoreline treatment. It also asked the Minister

of Science to direct his attention to the urgent need for research: (a) to assess possible ecological side effects and long-term effects, before decisions are made to proceed with any drastic and irreversible steps in the project, and (b), to record features of scientific interest which are likely to be destroyed.

Cape Turakirae

The President represented the Society at a hearing before the Minister of Lands concerning Cape Turakirae. Negotiations are proceeding, but it seems unlikely that more than a portion of the unique series of raised beaches will be preserved.

Preservation of native communities

(a) The Society wrote to the Ministers of Science and Lands, in support of Dr. A. F. Mark's proposal to reserve 900 acres of low altitude snow tussock grassland north of Lake Mahinerangi.

(b) The Society wrote a letter to Mr. A. E. Esler, for him to use in support of his move to preserve Himatangi Bush, a remnant of dune forest in the Manawatu district.

(c) Preservation of remnants of tussock grassland on the Canterbury Plains has been on the Society's agenda for some years, and a circular sent out in April revealed a good deal of support for the proposal. A working party of four (not all members of this Society) has been able to locate surviving areas of native grassland and scrub between the Rakaia and Waimakariri rivers. Ways and means of preserving representative portions of these are being urgently investigated.

(d) "Preliminary list of native communities which may possibly disappear within ten years." A list with the above title was drawn up by the Society about 1958. There are 36 entries, and a recent check indicates that measures have been, or are being taken to preserve some 16 of these, and that in at least two other communities, the threat is not as urgent as originally thought. This still leaves some 18 communities, the status of which should be ascertained. If necessary, moves for their protection should be started.

Local conservation issues of interest to the Society

The Society is approaching members to act as local "watchdogs" in matters of conservation. Dr. A. F. Mark has agreed to act in this capacity in Otago, and Mr. A. E. Beveridge in the Rotorua district. Offers from other members in other districts would be welcomed.

P. WARDLE, Convenor.