

criterion for national park selection as scenic grandeur. The original Act stipulated only "scenery of such distinctive quality or natural features so beautiful or unique . . ." the revised 1979 Act added the words "ecological systems so unique or scientifically important" etc. David Thom, for the first time, describes the evolution in thinking which led up to the most significant changes in national park philosophy. It is perhaps the most valuable section of the whole book.

Of the many people who made great contributions to the development of New Zealand's national parks, David Thom singles out for particular mention Lance MacCaskill and A.P. Harper. And rightly so; Lance, if ever, was the genius behind the development of an indigenous national park philosophy and A.P. Harper, through his influence as a renowned explorer and climber, and a FMC President, was more than anyone else the true founder of national parks in New Zealand. Many others are, appropriately, mentioned: N.M. Thomson, Rod Syme, Bernard Teague, Perrine Moncrieff to name but a few. I would like to have seen more emphasis given to others; the foresighted Lands administrators of earlier times who set aside such large areas of forest and other reserves and thus made possible the creation of today's national park estate. The dedicated Commissioners of Crown Lands who, as Park Board chairmen, with no experience or guidance, had to pioneer the administration of parks at the local level; the equally dedicated private park Board members who contributed so much through their local knowledge and their enthusiasm; and the many scientists from DSIR, Internal Affairs and the Forest Service who together provided a sound ecological basis for the management of national park land and the animals and plants thereon. But above all it was the ranger staff who more than anyone else were responsible for fashioning national parks into their present shape. Many passages in the book recognize this, and it was parti-

cularly appropriate that the text for the 14 photo essays on individual parks were written by and attributed to serving national and maritime park rangers.

This is a kindly book. Not once does David Thom criticize those who over the decades did not agree with each and every aspect of the national park ethic or who opposed the large expansion of national parks which took place. If there is a fault, it is perhaps that he is so diplomatic that at times his interpretation of events becomes a little bit bland. This would not matter if the book were purely descriptive, but it does detract from its value as a definitive history. The national park movement in New Zealand has been the subject of many controversies, some of them violent and some of them unfortunately not yet resolved. Here are just a few – the long-standing and finally insoluble conflict between providing more and more tourist facilities and maintaining national park values; game management, particularly in the Fiordland Wapiti area; the developing of unsightly ski facilities at Tongariro and elsewhere; the pleas by wilderness enthusiasts for no development at all over quite large areas; the pressures for more roading; the demands for mineral prospecting and the extraction and sale of water; and the raising of lakes. Perhaps the most important of all were the conflicts in the allocation of State-owned land to sustained yield forestry on the one hand and complete forest preservation through national park reservation on the other. David deals with some of these, though not exhaustively or very critically; perhaps some later historian may tackle them.

It would be stretching a point to compare this book to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony but the title of the last movement of that great work "Ode to Joy" invites the thought. For in a sense this is what the book is really all about. In celebrating a centenary, it is a "joyous" celebration of much more – of the wonderfully happy circumstances that New Zea-

land has such great beauty, such diversity of landscape, such magnificent mountain, river and lake scenery, such a long and spectacular coastline, so much unspoilt wilderness and such a unique and fascinating flora and fauna. David Thom communicates his happiness that all this exists and that despite the difficulties and controversies, so much has been enshrined in a network of national parks which is now the envy of the whole world. We share his euphoria.

**A.P. Thomson**

**Note: The above review first appeared in the National Parks Centennial Newsletter. – Ed.**

## Vegetative cover of New Zealand

**The vegetative cover of New Zealand. P. F. J. Newsome, 1987. Water and Soil Miscellaneous Publication No. 112. 153 pp. 2 map sheets. ISSN 0110-4705. \$38.50 including postage.**

This book with its two accompanying maps summarizes the current vegetation in New Zealand. The project was begun by the National Water and Soil Conservation Organization in 1981 and was built upon earlier work such as the Land Resource Inventory data. It classifies current vegetation into three levels – eight vegetative cover groups (e.g. grassland, scrub or forest); 47 vegetative cover classes (e.g. Podocarp forest, unimproved pasture or gorse scrub) and 17 vegetative cover elements which highlight selected components of the vegetation (e.g. Matagouri, mangroves or wetland communities). The maps being at a scale of 1:1,000,000 mean that the smallest mapping unit covers about 800 ha.

The book gives a description of the classes and elements, illustrating the former with excellent photographs. There is also a short historical summary of our vegetation together than an analysis of today's vegetation.

This publication will be of use to those involved in land management or land use planning and to those interested in our vegetation and the impact of man upon it. Perhaps my biggest question mark was being unsure how the author decided on when the vegetation changed between some of the groups or classes. For example, what proportions of gorse or grass must there be before calling an area grassland, gorse scrub, or grassland – gorse scrub? However, I doubt if this will detract from the use of the maps.

**D. J. Mead**

## 'The Battle for Bowen Falls'

In this new booklet (published May 1988) A.P. Thomson presents an intriguing chapter in the history of Fiordland National Park. He deals with a story of the mid-1920s when the Bowen Falls were nearly used for electricity generation with a factory to manufacture fertilizers built alongside. The controversy which followed the proposals was historic, for it was the first time that the sanctity of National Parks became a topic for public debate; it was also probably New Zealand's first ever nationwide controversy on a conservation issue.

The author was inspired to research and

write the story through the close involvement of his scientist-politician grandfather, the Hon. George Malcolm Thomson. It was he who led and won the battle, publicly and in political and scientific circles, to save the scenery of Milford Sound.

The story is of interest to agriculturists and engineers as well as to conservationists. It has two ironic quirks, one concerning Caswell Sound and the other Lake Manapouri.

"The Battle for Bowen Falls" is obtainable (cost \$6.00 includes postage and GST) from the author and publisher: A. P. Thomson, 8 Nicholson Road, Khandallah, Wellington 4.