



Photo: Alan Mark

THE PRICE OF PRESERVATION

David Bellamy with fellow conservationists on top of Hump Ridge in western Southland, overlooking Waitutu Forest — the largest tract of unspoiled lowland forest now left in New Zealand. From left to right, Tony Hughes (Whirinaki Promotion Trust), Les Hutchins (National Parks and Reserves Authority), Bellamy, and Chris Ward (NFAC).

The boundless enthusiasm of Dr David Bellamy, Botanic Man and botanist extraordinaire, appears dangerously close to extinction as he nears the end of an exhausting fortnight in New Zealand promoting the preservation of Whirinaki Forest.

Aides remark, with wonderment and amusement, on how Bellamy actually fell asleep on his feet just prior to a meeting with Minister of Forests, Koro Wetere — a momentary lapse.

Even now, in *Forest and Bird*'s head office, as he is about to head off to the airport after the hardest two week's work in his life (his words), the demands on his time don't cease; the editor of *Forest and Bird* wants to quiz him on the merits of tourism as a means of promoting conservation.

Bellamy has described New Zealand as "one of the world's best kept secrets." He believes that the two areas he took a special interest in while he was here — Whirinaki and Waitutu — need to be highlighted.

"One, the Whirinaki forest, takes us in our mind's eye and in genetic terms back to the days of the dinosaurs. I do think the podocarps should be renamed the 'dinosaur trees.' It is a very special place and could be advertised: 'Come and see the giant podocarp dinosaur forests.'

"Research is showing just how important Waitutu is. There is this wonderful series of steps coming out of the sea, marine terraces which have been gradually rising up over the last one million years. They've never been covered with ice, because the oldest ones were quite low down during the ice age and they gradual-

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ly rose up. Here you have a time staircase where the evolution of soils and forests has been allowed to go on untouched," says Bellamy. Many New Zealanders fail to realise the specialness of such areas, whereas they will flock to attractions such as the redwoods in California. Americans, on the other hand, recognise the value of natural wonders; the term "environmental interpretation" originated in the US, and in New Zealand the practice is still in its infancy, although Lands and Survey and Forest Service are making determined strides to catch up.

Bellamy is keen to see New Zealand have a number of its unique areas named as World Heritage sites — a listing he has described as one of the cheapest advertisements for a region.

"You haven't started to cash in on the sort of tourist with money, who when they go somewhere want to see something special. People get a bit fed up just cruising around the world, really not seeing anything but popping into Auckland or Brisbane — cities and things.

"But there are now world cruises to see the world's heritage sites, the most important sites in the world. That is going to be a

growing thing because there are people with more time on their hands," Bellamy says.

To those who point to the dangers of New Zealand being over-run by tourists, Bellamy has two answers. First, tourism will ensure preservation.

"You know how things are eroded away, day by day — a new road goes through, a new bit of logging, mainly because people in this country look upon the bush as having no value. The tourist aspect will bring immense value to it and therefore it will be preserved." Secondly, increased numbers of tourists need not ruin natural areas.

"How do you stop the bush from being loved to death? Well, you do that by proper management. Proper management means jobs, and jobs are the one thing that New Zealand youngsters want. You've got a fantastic number of youngsters coming out with university degrees who would be able to slip into these jobs.

"If you don't manage it, if you don't show that other potential, then I'm afraid it will be rubbed away by other forms of progress," Bellamy says.

He urges the Government to set up an "ecological summit" at which all the important natural areas are pinpointed — "then we could stop this damned silly business of having to fight for another forest every week."

With that the genial nature publicist is whisked off to the airport and the other side of the world, there presumably to continue some more "damned silly business" in the name of conservation.