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Loving Our National Parks to Death

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Acknowledgments

The concept for this essay was gained after my having spent a summer working at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park in 2004, allowing a perfect opportunity to observe the National Park and its many different functions.

Sincere thanks to my supervisors Judy Bennett and Tom Brooking for their guidance and direction during this year. Also, thanks to Ray Bellringer for allowing me to talk with him and for explaining the processes I saw occurring.

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<tr>
<td>AMCNPMP</td>
<td>Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Department of Conservation</td>
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<td>FMC</td>
<td>Federated Mountain Clubs</td>
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<td>MCNPMP</td>
<td>Mount Cook National Park Management Plan</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
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<td>ROS</td>
<td>Recreation Opportunities Spectrum</td>
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<td>SPHC</td>
<td>South Pacific Hotel Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>THC</td>
<td>Tourist Hotel Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>VDSG</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The current relationship between the Department of Conservation and privately owned and operated tourist ventures within National Parks has emerged over a century long development within New Zealand; from a nation obsessed with land improvement and good utilisation to one very conscious of both the tourist potential within the New Zealand landscape and the need to conserve the natural environment as much as possible.

The New Zealand conservation estate has had a long history of its sites also being used as major tourist destinations. This was due to an inseparable link Europeans saw between the aesthetic appeal of land and its preservation for the purpose of people enjoying its beauty. The common mindset was one of preserving land so that people could gain the many benefits of experiencing nature through simply observing, walking, climbing or hunting in the bush. Thus, since the origins of conservation areas such as National Parks in New Zealand, public use has been understood as a key objective of their existence.¹

Increasing privatisation of tourist operations coming into National Parks over recent years has complicated the relationship between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and tourist operators. Before DOC was created, large government corporations held National Park tourist operations in monopoly and Parks themselves were run by several different government departments. The Tourist Hotel Corporation (THC) owned the Hermitage Hotel, Glencoe Lodge, Alpine Guides and the Ski planes and Mount Cook Airport facilities all within Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. When DOC was established as the ruler of all that was conservation-orientated, they had a small number of groups, like THC, to negotiate with in complying with the new conservation regulations. Since the THC was later sold to private shareholders under several different companies, DOC has had to regularly review its management policies to control the wide assortment of tourism investments coming into the area.

This essay will look at the development of relations between the national tourism industry and the conservation movement as the two co-evolved in the twentieth century. Its main interest, however, is in how DOC is currently managing tourism ventures within the country's National Parks through specifically focusing on Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park as a case study. From 1960 onwards this relationship between tourism and the conservation movement has come to a head as tourism increased and placed pressure on the conservation estate through commercialisation. New Zealand also experienced the formation of a public 'environmental conscience' at the same time. Privately owned tourist operations became the way forward and state asset sales in the 1980s and 1990s ensured that New Zealand was exposed to a global market.

To show how privatisation affected the relationship between conservation management and the tourism industry I will use the example of tourist developments at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, particularly since the emergence of DOC as a governmental agency in 1987. I will focus on the relationship between tourism and conservation to see if these two factors are compatible and the extent to which negotiation is required to maintain the image of New Zealand National Parks as areas of preservation. The study will also examine the huge level of domination by DOC in National Park management. Under current legislation, tourist operators can make no move without having complied with DOC policy. While this would appear to eliminate any 'inherent conflict', tourism is on the increase in New Zealand and National Parks have to deal with more visitors than ever before.

The reason for choosing to focus on Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park as a case study for this investigation is because it is a microcosm of some major attitudes towards land in New Zealand culture. On the one hand the area is a major tourist attraction in New Zealand, internationally renowned and well capable of drawing thousands upon thousands of visitors to the National Park every year. On the other hand, because this National Park is comprised solely of New Zealand's stunning alpine scenery, the Main Divide of the Southern Alps, many look to it as a place of isolation and a glimpse into a world largely untouched by man. Thus there are two imperatives being played out within the one landscape – one where the land is perfect for attracting tourists who contribute greatly to the national economy, and the other where too much landscape use by tourists
and adventure seekers can spoil the very scenery people are coming to enjoy. How apt the saying "killing the goose that lays the golden egg".

The body of this essay will interact with two parallel discourses – that written on conservation and the development of New Zealand National Parks, and that on tourism and the landscape being used to create national icons and tourist attractions. People have long since noticed problems between conservation and tourism, but because of their relatively short histories in New Zealand, historical overviews of both have only recently appeared in the last decade.

The word 'conservation' has contested meanings. This study deals with two different aspects of National Park management: that of 'preservation' and that of 'use' for the benefit and enjoyment of the public as used in National Park legislation. ‘Conservation’ has also been added to the language of National Park management to mean the equivalent of ‘preservation’. I will briefly look at a definition of the terms ‘conservation’ and ‘preservation’ which describes the two as having quite different meanings, thus posing a problem for DOC in their National Park management role. The problem lies in using ‘preservation’ as the aim for National Parks, but in reality practicing something more similar to ‘conservation’ which is defined as ‘saving natural resources for later consumption.’ The practise of ‘conservation’ thus aligns itself with the aim of National Park ‘use’ rather than the stated goal of 'preservation'. For the sake of argument I will follow this definition and write ‘preservation’ when referring to the aims of National Park management, and ‘conservation’ when referring to what is being put into practise.

According to David Young, a conservationist attitude grew within the New Zealand mindset, and came to a head during the 1960s and 1970s with the protests against the government's 'Think Big' project, and specifically at the selling of hydro-electric power rights at Lake Manapouri to an Australian company. Around this time the average New

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Zealander developed an interest in how their environment was being used by others.\(^3\) Young’s book, *Our Islands, Our Selves: a history of conservation in New Zealand* is the most recent, overarching work compiled on New Zealand’s conservation estate. Young’s focus remains on the notion of conservation, where it comes from and the form in which it appeared in New Zealand. He makes particularly useful mention of how ideas of leisure and tourism were used to strengthen conservation in this country, and makes room for the issue of indigenous rights and values in New Zealand conservation history.

David Thom compiled a useful narrative of New Zealand’s National Parks in 1987 for the centenary celebrations of Tongariro National Park and in time for the creation of the Department of Conservation. He outlines events leading to the construction of New Zealand’s conservation legislation – the 1952 and 1980 National Parks Act, 1977 Reserves Act and the 1987 Conservation Act and places New Zealand National Park management within an international context.

Margaret McClure gives a concise overview of the developments in New Zealand tourism over the last century in *The Wonder Country: making New Zealand tourism*. She sets the scene with a parallel between the early conservation efforts of the twentieth century and the actions of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, established by the Liberal Party in 1903. McClure places the government as the ‘prime mover’ in the major tourist developments, and journeys through the government take-overs of hotels at major resort areas, the establishment of national corporations such as THC and National Airways and the more recent developments of Tourism NZ advertising programmes that target international markets. It is here that McClure’s research is helpful in demonstrating the value of the New Zealand tourist industry to the economy, and thus how much effort the government will go to ensure the increase of both.

Because of its iconic nature, the Hermitage hotel has had the focus of tourism orientated publications on Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, and because it is still the largest tourist operation in the Park, it deserves the attention. The hotel’s history has been well written about by family members of old Hermitage managers, such as the Wigleys,

as well as being included in records of visitor climbing achievements.\textsuperscript{4} It has also been succinctly placed within the history of the THC. The hotel itself is an example of the government’s aims to bring tourist facilities up to an international standard during the 1960s. A Centennial publication was printed in 1984 by the THC, recording the last 100 years of the Hermitage Hotel.

Besides hotels and mountaineering, few other tourist operations have been covered historically beyond technical reports of their environmental impacts. This is due to most tourism ventures being relatively recent features of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. On a national scale, current forms of tourism (especially adventure tourism) are historically young in New Zealand but are increasing in popularity. Wide-spread concern over the environmental impact of tourist attractions such as helicopters, ski planes, and visitor tours has consequently increased during the last forty years.

The developments in ‘ecotourism’ ventures over recent decades indicate that there are possible ways of combating environmental misuse within New Zealand geography. Ecotourism gives people nature experiences and teaches them the importance of respecting the environment and leaving it in an undisturbed state. But because tourism is essentially a business, there will always be contest between profit and preservation: the best preservation is found in areas where there is no human presence but the best profit is made through increasing numbers of people purchasing services like guided tours of natural environments.

Hence there are major issues of over-crowding in some of New Zealand’s National Parks, with many conservation and heritage groups concerned that tourism is destroying irreplaceable environments unique to New Zealand. Within the South Island there has been current discussion about DOC considering capping tourist numbers for entry into the Milford area of Fiordland National Park to try and restore its former seemingly untouched appeal.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{4} See Freda Du Faur, \textit{The conquest of Mount Cook and other climbs: an account of four seasons’ mountaineering on the Southern Alps of New Zealand}, (Christchurch: Capper Press, 1977), for her climbing achievements in the Mount Cook area.

\textsuperscript{5} Peta Carey, ‘Sound and Fury’ article in \textit{New Zealand Listener}. July 26-August 1, 2003. vol. 189, no. 3298
On a flip-side, Geoff Kearsley’s *Sustainable Tourism Programme: a review* gives evidence for tourists and visitors to National Parks and scenic areas making their decisions to visit based on the level of overcrowding found at the desired spot. He distinguishes between the kinds of visitors likely to choose to visit a more popular place as opposed to those going into the ‘high country wilderness’ where fewer people are to be found. This raises the possibility that nature-based tourism might reach equilibrium in sustainable use of its own accord. Tourists will choose against going to overcrowded destinations and thus eventually diminish the economic drive for more services at such places. This answer, however, is reliant upon there being a continuous supply of new scenic places to go when others become overcrowded. But New Zealand has a limited supply of National Park land and so, once popular sites are filled with people, the demand to use and get to more isolated places could become stronger, consequently removing the untouched appeal of National Parks.

Because of the parallel trajectory of tourism and conservation in New Zealand, this essay requires a bridge to be made between historical events in both areas. I will do this through investigating government policies and decisions from the last fifty years to gauge the mentalities behind the movements of the government’s Tourism Department and the onset of conservation and the establishment of DOC. This will also create an idea of where the move to privatisation came from, during the Labour Government’s policy of ‘Rogernomics’, and its effect on New Zealand’s conservation estate in dealing with tourism. There have been many non-governmental groups and organisations that played vital and prominent roles in the development of conservation management, but at an official level it is generally only government policy that we see, despite the lobbying that has gone in behind the making of national policy.

This study builds on work documenting New Zealand’s developments in tourism and the burgeoning of the conservation movement mostly during the first half of the twentieth century. It is in the latter half of the twentieth century that the government became heavily involved in extending the New Zealand tourism market to overseas – a major feature of current tourism objectives, and also when issues between conservation

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6 Geoff Kearsley, *Sustainable Tourism: a review*, (Dunedin: Public Policy Research Institute, University of
and tourism came to a head and required political decision making to guarantee action. This will be my focus period.

To understand the current National Park management regime, I will refer to policy documents such as the original 1952 and the 1980 revised National Parks Act, the 1987 Conservation Act and the local management plans of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, which date from 1981 to 2004.

Chapter one will broadly cover the background information necessary to understand the relationship between conservation and tourism, from the turn of the twentieth century until approximately the 1960s. I will review the historiography of the first fifty to sixty years of New Zealand tourism and the origins of the conservation movement, and place the development of Mount Cook as a national icon in both tourism and preservation into the stories of both streams.

Chapter two leads on from the 1960s, looking briefly at the political origins of the move to privatisation, and of its application in the late 1980s as a site where the inherent conflict between conservation and tourism emerged clearly. I will illustrate how the quest for private ownership, during the late 1980s and 1990s, was dealt with by both the government and DOC when it was established in 1987. This chapter will leave the situation at the point where contemporary issues became obvious.

Chapter three integrates the developments at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park from the 1970s onwards within the picture of DOC’s managing the encroaching masses of tourists upon National Parks as illustrated in Chapter two. Using Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park as a case study I will focus on how the relationship between DOC and privately owned tourist operations is being negotiated now. I will project the current picture forward into the future to see what changes might occur in National Park management and tourism operations within conservation sites.

To acknowledge changes to the official name of Mount Cook National Park in 1998, following the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act, I will refer to the Park and all its associated material pre-1998 as Mount Cook National Park. When this study goes beyond

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Otago, 2001)
1998 I will use the current full name of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park to acknowledge the Crown’s recognition of Ngai Tahu cultural values held in the area.
CHAPTER ONE

Exposure

European New Zealand early prioritised her land resources as a very valuable asset. Economic forces placed settler establishment and the development of a strong agricultural industry at the top of the agenda for the early New Zealand government. It soon purchased vast estates of land and broke them up into sections for settlers to cultivate.

Canterbury was the prime pastoral area of the South, with sheep stations established from the outskirts of Christchurch to the plains and valleys of the Southern Alps. Within the Mount Cook region, at the top of Lake Pukaki there were five sheep and cattle stations – Mount Cook (Aoraki), Birch Hill, Glentanner, Braemar and Balmoral that were in full operation before climbers and tourists entered the region.

Forestry was also a major colonial industry throughout the country, useful for exports and employment, as well as for land clearance for cultivation, pastoral use and settlement.

The settlers were pragmatic in their views on land use. They came seeking a livelihood and land ‘development’ was the key. Before people were content to retain land for recreational purposes in New Zealand they first had to be content that enough land was being used for more important economic functions such as farming.

Despite this mentality, the opening up of Mount Cook to increasing amounts of human activity came at a time when the New Zealand government recognised the tourism potential in places such as the Southern Alps, but also learnt that there were several good reasons for protecting some of the environment from exploitation and destruction. Hence progress in creating a vigorous tourism industry was accompanied by legislation to safeguard national scenic icons from future ruin.

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It was through pastoralism and forestry that places like Mount Cook first came to the attention of the government. Sir George Bowen, colonial Governor from 1868 to 1873, travelled to the Mount Cook area, staying at Birch Hill station during his last year of office. In examining the farmland and mountains, he was struck by the beauty of the area and the tourist potential within it and was consequently ‘instrumental’ in saving the remaining block of native bush in the Mount Cook valley – now known as ‘Governor’s Bush’.

Areas such as that visited by Bowen contained vast stretches of land with extraordinary scenery that were useless for close settlement but which were drawing support for preservation because of their rarity. These places figured highly in the national imagination as sites where people could be physically restored by nature. Bathing in the Rotorua hot pools was said to cure various diseases and skin problems, while taking in the fresh alpine air of the Southern Alps and the Sounds would clear the head, invigorate the body and enhance the soul. The Liberal Government of 1891 to 1912 would soon develop these sites and market them as ‘health resorts’ – the prime tourist destinations of the country.

Early travellers and explorers to Mount Cook like W. S. Green and Julius von Haast proclaimed the natural beauty of the area and reported their views widely, particularly on the beauty and grandeur of Mount Cook with its potential for alpine climbing. Green’s comments are said to have affected the tourist development of Mount Cook by putting the peak on the map for the climbing world. Through publicity surrounding his climbs in the Tasman Valley and his attempt at Mount Cook, Green opened Mount Cook up to both the New Zealand and the British public.

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3 Pinney, p. 59.
In 1884 Frank Huddleston acquired two sections of land in the Mount Cook valley where he established the very first Hermitage Hotel. He attempted to run the business independently for ten years, catering to climbers and tourists visiting the area but due to undeveloped roads and a lack of efficient transport into the hinterlands of the South Island, only the wealthy and leisured could afford to make the journey. Visitor numbers were consistent but too few to match operating costs and eventually Huddleston claimed bankruptcy. Apparently Huddleston’s move to establish the Hermitage as a base for tourists at Mount Cook encouraged the government to make the Hooker Valley into a recreation reserve in 1885 with a later addition of the Tasman Valley in 1887. The government took control of Huddleston’s Hermitage in 1895 to develop its potential and included the hotel as one of its health resorts, central to the budding New Zealand tourist industry.

In 1901, the Liberal Government established the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in a bid to grow interest in New Zealand scenery. As if to offset this political shift towards promoting recreation tourism, legislation was made creating scenic reserves to protect parts of the landscape from misuse. These reserves often housed the government’s hotels and health resort facilities, bringing tourism into what would be later seen as preservation areas. In time it would be understood as detrimental to have uncontrolled tourist operations occurring in reserve areas, but at the turn of the twentieth century the concept of preservation was understood to mean retaining land for its scenic appeal. Consequently, tourists were the very people who visited scenic reserves and little was understood about the negative impact they would have on the environment.

Official scenery preservation in New Zealand had influences from the United States with the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872. David Thom lucidly describes how the short burst of early conservation legislation in New Zealand was due to changing cultural attitudes expressed through political processes. The New Zealand public realised the extensive destruction of native land for infrastructure, and being influenced by overseas solutions, the attitudes of officialdom began to shift towards preservation. A new sense of worth and value was ascribed to landforms unique to New

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Zealand. Preservation began under the 1874 Forests Act through the protection of forests from indiscriminate destruction. The 1885 Land Act and its amendment in 1892, however, were the first pieces of legislation to include scenery preservation\(^9\), through which the Hooker and Tasman Valleys at Mount Cook were registered as reserves.

New Zealand’s very first National Park was formed in 1887 when Ngati Tuwharetoa chief Te Heuheu Tukino gifted the summits of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu to the nation, for the benefit of all, under the care and protection of the government.\(^10\) Tongariro National Park was officially created in 1894 through an Act of Parliament. To the West, Mount Egmont National Park was founded in 1900 in the Taranaki region.

The government created the Scenic Preservation Act in 1903 to formalise the supervision of landscapes requiring conservation.\(^11\) Under the Act the government could purchase private land for reserves, whereas previously land available for reservation had been restricted to Crown land. For three years the management of scenic reserves was under the control of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts. Control was later transferred to the Department of Lands and Survey due to their germane interest in land use.\(^12\)

Aside from a Scenery Preservation Commission, established within the 1903 Act and briefly used from 1904 to 1906 to create more scenic reserves, there were few other measures taken to adequately manage the new reserve areas. Reserve sites were only required to be fenced off and left from all intentional disturbances.\(^13\) After the Scenery Preservation Commission was disbanded, it was replaced by a board of government officials from the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, the Lands Department, and the Secretary of Native Affairs working alongside local Departmental officials in whose areas the reserve was being considered. They had criteria by which land was chosen for

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\(^9\) David Thom, p. 131
\(^10\) Ibid, p.123
\(^12\) McClure, p. 60. See also Thom, pp. 117-120
\(^13\) Helen Leach, “Early attempts at historic site protection in New Zealand” in *Archaeology in New Zealand* 34, no. 2 (June 1991), pp. 83, 85.
\(^14\) New Zealand Statutes, *Scenery Preservation Act*, 1903, no. 54, pp. 240-242
reserve. These guidelines were oriented towards encouraging tourists to visit scenic reserve sites and keeping reserves off farm land.\textsuperscript{15}

During this period, much of the legislation allowing the Crown to purchase land for scenic reserves was entangled within wider Liberal government aims to acquire as much land as possible, particularly Maori land, for settler and Crown use. This was often done at the expense of people who previously had open access to such land.

In terms of conservation measures, the legislation of the 1880s into the early twentieth century satisfied the government that enough had been done to protect New Zealand’s environment, as the issue of creating sound preservation methods was largely overlooked until later decades. There were several public figures, however, that remained committed to the protection of New Zealand flora and fauna, establishing organisations such as the Native Bird Protection Society. Leonard Cockayne, Harry Ell and Prime Minister Thomas Mackenzie had long careers in promoting conservation right into the 1930s. Their interests lay in wildlife protection and the retention of forests for soil and water conservation.

Until its ending in 1941, the Scenery Preservation Board had initiated limited forms of pest control and relied on volunteer rangers to monitor the scenic reserves it had created. Reserves established by the Board were placed under the general administration of the Lands Department.

Conservation developments through the 1920s and 30s were found in additions added to Tongariro National Park in 1922 and the Public Reserves, Domains and National Parks Act created in 1928. This Act gave local authorities more specific guidelines to manage the domains and reserves in their areas, and also to formalise the transfer of management when a domain or reserve became a National Park. It stated that for each Park there was to be a Board who had the power to employ rangers and other servants as they saw fit. The Act also set up a hierarchy with the preservation management system whereby all Boards and their employees were responsible to the Crown, and specifically the Minister of Lands.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Tony Nightingale and Paul Dingwall, \textit{Our Picturesque Heritage: 100 Years of Scenery Preservation in New Zealand}, (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 2003), pp. 41-42
\textsuperscript{16} NZS, \textit{Public Reserves, Domains and National Parks Act}, 1928, no. 36 pp. 465-493
Despite these efforts, throughout the inter-war period and increasing towards the end of World War II grew a feeling that holistic administration of scenic reserves required comprehensive and national guidelines that could accommodate changes in the ways reserves were used by the public and yet ensure that reserve management be generalised across the country. Because more National Parks were being created there was concern that Parks also needed further, more specific management beyond that given to scenic reserves.

While the early scenery preservation movement had established itself, the Hermitage at Mount Cook had been firmly ensconced as a national icon and prime tourist destination, composed of two reserve areas officially managed by the Lands Department. But amidst its popularity in the tourist industry it was having its own private battle.

The Tourist and Health Resorts Department had bought the failing Hermitage Hotel from Frank Huddleston in 1895 and had embarked on its role to provide tourist accommodation “where private enterprise could not succeed or did not venture.” Government efforts at running the hotel achieved little more than Huddleston due to the harsh environments of the Alps. Vegetation was minimal and high altitudes meant that for five months out of every year deep snow enclosed the region, preventing general access. W. S. Green wrote in his accounts of climbing adventures amongst the Mount Cook glaciers that the owner and family of Mount Cook station lived on site during the summer months, but retreated to Timaru during winter because of the extreme weather and isolation.

By the early 1900s, the Hermitage itself was old and too small to become a profitable hotel. The government employed guides to climb with summer visitors and repair the hotel in winter, but rugged mountain conditions had left the hotel in poor shape. With Tourist Department publicity of the hotel fully underway, the Hermitage attracted more visitors who expected a high degree of comfort, but were often left wanting. The road to the Hermitage had not yet been tackled – it took two long days to arrive by coach and tracks were often washed out by flooded streams, and the hotel itself

17 McClure, p. 60
18 Green, p. 130
had neither electricity nor consistent hot water and sometimes ran out of beds for its visitors.\(^{19}\)

Enter entrepreneur Rodolph Wigley with a plan to bring motor-car access to the Hermitage. In 1906 Wigley and a friend made the first motor-car journey to Mount Cook and the trip took only one day instead of two. With the help of friends Wigley soon established the Mount Cook Motor Car Service to provide more efficient transport to tourists wanting a ‘weekend jaunt’ in the mountains.\(^{20}\)

In comparison to the other major New Zealand tourist destination of Rotorua, Mount Cook was far behind in development, and successive governments had few plans to improve the situation. So much funding had been pumped into the Rotorua bath houses that little finance was left over and the prevalent argument against using economic resources for non-agriculture purposes put the government in a difficult position. Parliament refused financial support for the development of other tourism destinations, and held off building a new and improved Hermitage until 1911-1912.\(^{21}\) The new hotel was completed and opened in 1914, having been relocated from its old flood-prone spot at White Horse Hill to its current location between the Glencoe and Kitchener streams. As the new 50-room hotel was being completed, main traffic links were established in the South Island, connecting with Queenstown and Mount Cook creating a loop between the major destinations of the South, Milford Sound, Dunedin and Christchurch.\(^{22}\)

While amenities improved at Mount Cook, it became well known for both the hotel’s entertainment, its situation in the Mount Cook valley and the guiding skills available for climbers there.\(^{23}\) Tourists travelled from all around the country and overseas to experience the Southern Alps under the capable hands of Hermitage guides. Within a few years skiing on the Tasman Glacier would become one of the most popular tourist activities.

World War I overwhelmed the attention of both the government and the public, and advertisements for the tourism sector were placed on hold during the war years as interest dimmed in light of events overseas. By the end of the war, the Hermitage was

\(^{19}\) McClure, pp. 68, 70, 86
\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 70
\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 72-73
\(^{22}\) Ibid., pp. 76-77
running at a loss every year and hotel tariffs were raised to match inflation. Calls for the government to sell the Hermitage to private enterprise became louder and Rodolph Wigley applied for its lease. In 1922 the government granted Wigley a five-year lease under his business the Mount Cook Company, and he revealed his plans to develop ski fields, extend the alpine season, and open up Mount Cook to a range of New Zealanders.²⁴ Wigley’s lease to the Mount Cook area included full management of the Hermitage, as well as a lease to operate in the Hooker and Tasman Valleys which were listed as reserves as aforementioned.

Wigley’s mission to open up the Southern Alps to all New Zealanders was helped by the Railway and the Tourist Departments’ efforts to bring increased access and cheaper fares for rail trips throughout the South Island. This was done in an attempt to match the popularity of private motor cars and keep the railway network viable.²⁵ Arthur’s Pass, which became the next National Park in 1929, was advertised as a Sunday trip from Christchurch.²⁶ Wigley extended the range of sleeping facilities at the Hermitage to cater for those on a limited budget as well as for wealthy visitors. He also advertised the Hermitage as having activities to suit every person’s wants – be it high climbing, short walks and picnics, skiing, horse-riding, or relaxing on the veranda.²⁷

In all his plans, Wigley had been funded by government loans but profits from the hotel were not enough to pay much back. The government, however, granted him another lease, this time for fifteen years, because of his efforts in creating a popular holiday destination. Wigley was somewhat helped by the increasing popularity of skiing as a recreational sport. Enabling tourists to ski on the Tasman Glacier near Ball Hut meant that the Hermitage could be open all year round. In 1935 the first New Zealand Ski Championships were held at Mount Cook.²⁸ Wigley’s son Harry would later write a biographical account of his father’s management at Mount Cook and Harry himself

²³ Ibid., p. 77, see also Dr. Faur for her excellent opinions of the Mount Cook guides.
²⁴ McClure, p.89
²⁵ Ibid., p. 97
²⁶ Ibid., p. 95
²⁷ Ibid., p. 101
²⁸ Thom, p. 138
would invent the first ski plane and successfully land it on the Tasman Glacier, initiating a new tourist venture that is still popular today.\textsuperscript{29}

While the interwar period with its Great Depression had been precarious, publicity to allow average New Zealand families to tour the country was enhanced by the advent of cars as popular transport.\textsuperscript{30} Now New Zealanders could travel independently. Wigley met his aim to make the Hermitage available as a holiday destination to everyone through government loans. Using these he extended the range of accommodation tariffs to suit every budget during a difficult time for the national economy.\textsuperscript{31} Since its beginning, the Department of Tourism had been somewhat active in establishing government tourism agencies in overseas markets such as Australia, UK, USA, Canada and South Africa. In the 1920s and 1930s the international market was extended to South East Asia.\textsuperscript{32}

The onset of World War II delayed a promised influx of international visitors on the new passenger air services. During the 1940s tourism was limited by wartime cutbacks and national priorities recovering from the depression of the previous decade. Wigley was facing financial disaster in running the Hermitage and his transport company, and once tourist numbers began to pick up towards the end of the war, both Wigley and the government agreed that the Hermitage should be sold back to the Tourist Department. The year 1944 marked the date and the Department was confident about a post-war boom for the industry.\textsuperscript{33}

As had happened before, events in the realm of tourism were closely matched by developments in conservation ethics during the 1930s that would eventually lead to the formation of the 1952 National Parks Act. Thom portrays a second shift in cultural attitudes where people recognised the fragile ecological processes which lay behind the scenery that so many were coming to admire.\textsuperscript{34} It was here that preservation of

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\textsuperscript{29}See Harry Wigley, \textit{The Mount Cook Way: the first fifty years of the Mount Cook Company}, (Auckland: Collins, 1979), and also by Wigley, \textit{Ski-Plant Adventure: flying in the New Zealand Alps} (Wellington: Reed, 1977).

\textsuperscript{30}McClure, pp. 97-100

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 100-101

\textsuperscript{32}Tourism New Zealand, \textit{One Hundred Years Pure Progress: 1901-2001}, Tourism New Zealand, \textit{one hundred years of tourism} (Wellington: Tourism New Zealand, 2001) p. 10

\textsuperscript{33}McClure, p.164

\textsuperscript{34}Thom, pp. 132, 139
\end{flushleft}
landscapes became more than just ensuring everlasting beauty for beauty’s sake; rather, by recognising the interconnectedness of all geological and biological processes within such places, people understood the real value of scenery quite unique to New Zealand.\textsuperscript{35} Thom attributes the Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC), formed in 1931, with the creation of what would become the definitions of National Park management and usage.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, as the FMC had regular experiences of Park management, they could see areas needing improvement and began meeting with government to write proposals for better Park management. Their beliefs were that Parks and reserves required consistent control measures, organised under strict and specialised policy, rather than the current regime of control dispersed between many government departments with varying interests. The FMC ideal for National Parks involved free access to people for recreational purposes, as well as the extermination of exotic plants and animals to preserve Parks in a more native state.\textsuperscript{37} These ideas were taken and adopted into the 1952 National Parks Act, used in the Act’s statement of purpose in Sections 3(1), and 3(2)(a-d).

Now Park management could be based around a general concept of why land was being preserved – for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, to preserve native flora and fauna from extinction and to maintain soil, water and forest conservation areas\textsuperscript{38} - and a definition of what it meant to preserve (in terms of defining threats to preservation such as introduced animals and plants and visitor destruction of the native setting). The National Parks Act created a National Parks Authority which was in full charge of New Zealand Parks, and to which all local Park Boards were accountable.\textsuperscript{39} The Authority was headed by the Director-General of Lands and included a representative from all the major governmental departments concerned with land use and tourism as well as members of key conservation societies who had played a large part in the formation of the Act. The Act also assigned each existing Park its own Board, and described how each of these Boards would operate. The management structure was laid out right down to the micro-level of Park rangers.\textsuperscript{40} Government funding issues were addressed as to how the

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 140-141
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., pp. 132, 151
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 147
\textsuperscript{38} NZS, \textit{National Parks Act}, 1952, vol. II, no. 54 , section 3
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., section 4
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., Parts I and II
National Parks Authority and Boards would sustain such legislation. Boards would receive the bulk of funding from the government for the provision of ‘National Park purposes’. All other funding could be gained through rents from concessions, fees, penalties and grants.  

According to the requirements of the new Act, everything quickly got underway with Park management and in 1953 the Tasman and Hooker Valley Reserves were joined together with a further addition of the Hermitage area and made into Mount Cook National Park. Fiordland National Park was also created the same year. In 1956, government created Nelson Lakes National Park and Westland National Park in 1960. Also, after twenty eight years of petitions from advocates, Mount Aspiring National Park came into being in 1964. During the 1950s the National Parks Authority also began establishing a network of Park rangers who did hands-on conservation management work within each Park. An annual ranger’s forum began in 1959 that provided training for rangers and assistants. From here on key features of today’s conservation methods were launched as the National Parks Authority developed strategies for ridding Parks of wild animals and plants as well as programmes for extending and maintaining tracks and huts.

Perhaps encouraged further by these improvements which tidily laid out how the nation’s ‘playgrounds’ were to work for people, tourism in National Parks increased. A post-war boom came as predicted and on some levels New Zealand was ready to handle the influx. It had enough attractions to interest visitors and travel services were growing with demand. The one shortfall within the industry was the lack of accommodation – still an issue today. Not only were there too few beds, but the standard of New Zealand’s leading hotels was not on a par with international norms. The 1950s and 60s were spent by the Tourism Department extracting funds to renovate the underdeveloped hotels, and also to maximise the potential of New Zealand to the international tourist market. McClure discusses how it became clear to the Tourism Department that the entire hotel

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41 Ibid, sections 42-50 
44 Thom, p. 161
industry needed reshaping after the war, as many hotels were struggling to find staff and had almost turned into ‘beer houses’ where the only major source of profit was the bar.\textsuperscript{45} Following a wartime trend of high State involvement, excessive controls and fixed prices the hotel industry during the 1950s had become somewhat stagnant, as it failed to move with the times. The government still had tight tariff controls on hotels. Managers were unable to increase room rates, and thus profits were harder to come by. ‘Antiquated liquor laws’ meant that all bars closed at six o’clock and tourists had to be in for dinner by seven o’clock at the latest.\textsuperscript{46}

Parliamentary debates about the progress of the tourism industry centred on opinions that major hotels would do better if they were removed from the control of the government, out of bureaucracy and placed in the hands of private enterprise. New suggestions focused upon the formation of a hotel corporation so that adequate attention could be given to all major tourist hotels, especially those in isolated areas where the government had struggled to consistently maintain high standards.\textsuperscript{47}

As could be expected, complaints about controls on licensing and an inefficient and un-productive tourist industry occurred around election times, and the post-war decades were spotted with multiple changes of government between the Labour and National parties, and a snap election in 1951. In 1954 the national earnings from the tourist trade were £1,500,000 but this was apparently not enough in comparison to what could have been if tourist facilities were up to scratch.\textsuperscript{48} Members of the opposition Labour caucus felt it the government’s duty to improve the situation, but instead of selling to private enterprise a solution could be simply found in giving hotel managers more autonomy in decision making.\textsuperscript{49} On principle the Labour Party was opposed to corporatisation of State assets, especially after New Zealand came out from the War with a relatively healthy economy under Labour’s policy of high State control.

The Franz Josef Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1954 and though it was a severe loss, the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts now had an opportunity to push for faster and better hotel development through a new Corporation, as well as extending the

\textsuperscript{45} McClure, p. 177
\textsuperscript{46} New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 1954, vol. 303, p. 431
\textsuperscript{47} NZPD, 1954, vol. 304, pp. 1614-1615
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 976
tourism industry to include the West Coast as a popular destination. In 1955, despite objections from the opposition, the National Government set up the Tourist Hotel Corporation (THC), under the Tourist Hotel Corporation Act, to take over control of the government’s hotel chain formerly managed by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts. Nine hotels, including the Hermitage at Mount Cook were placed under the THC regime. A board of directors controlled the Corporation – similar to the structure of the National Parks Authority, but it also had the power to make loans to those wanting to establish tourist accommodation and to invest in new industry ventures. The Act gave the THC the potential to raise money through overseas financing. Foreign private investors could pay for tourist resorts, subject to the agreement of the Minister of Finance.\(^{50}\) This issue caused large debates over fears that foreign investments would buy out New Zealand’s tourist industry, leaving the country empty handed.\(^ {51}\) Whatever problems had marred the establishment of the THC, by 1956 the total amount spent in New Zealand by local and overseas tourists was £12,000,000 per year, with £2,400,000 of that being direct profit from foreign tourists.\(^{52}\)

The next year, another fire in one of its hotels and flooding in Queenstown disrupted the Tourist Hotel Corporation’s development programme of ‘onwards and upwards’. In 1957 the Hermitage was razed to the ground just after renovations had been completed bringing losses on the Hermitage to £48,443. As the Hermitage was a key stopover in the South Island tourist loop, its damage complicated travel networks and, out of necessity, the THC contracted rebuilding to begin immediately. The new Hermitage opened in 1958, setting an example for future THC hotels in terms of design and standards of service.\(^{53}\) The buffet style Alpine Restaurant was built into the new Hermitage in 1958, and in 1965 the THC created an al a carte restaurant in the Hotel, called the Panorama.\(^{54}\)

Because of an over-riding interest in maximising profits from the tourism industry, developments in the hotel trade became more focussed on hosting international

\(^{49}\) NZPD, 1954, vol. 303, p. 415
\(^{50}\) NZS, Tourist Hotel Corporations Act, 1955, vol. II, no. 89 sections 3-6, 9(i)
\(^{52}\) NZPD, 1956, vol. 309, p. 1635
\(^{53}\) McClure, p. 195
\(^{54}\) Ray Bellringer, interview with author, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, 8\(^{th}\) July, 2005
visitors and delivering a first-class standard of accommodation.\(^{55}\) While this succeeded in
making New Zealand an acceptable holiday destination for international tourists, it also
worked against allowing average New Zealand families the possibility of staying at
iconic tourist sites like the Hermitage at Mount Cook, although this was unintentional.\(^{56}\)
Hotel rates at Mount Cook had always been comparatively expensive because of the
isolation factor, but with the lure of wealthy foreign visitors and development through the
THC, it cultivated an elitist edge as the market strove to draw the wealth of the nations to
scenic sites.

Although the number of flights coming to New Zealand had increased since
World War II, it was during the 1960s that the Department of Tourism and Health
Resorts advertised international flight travel as a new wave of tourism – the jet age.\(^{57}\)
Since the THC’s establishment with its focus on hotels, the tourism department had been
somewhat confined to tourism promotion both locally and overseas. Now with a nation­
wide efficient hotel service, the Department encouraged increasing number of flights into
the country, particularly from the U.S., Australia, and Singapore and Japan in the
1970s.\(^{58}\) Air New Zealand was created in 1965, after buying out the Australian shares of
Tasman Empire Airways Limited. Links were established with the major European and
Middle Eastern continents.\(^{59}\) Thirteen years previous, Harry Wigley had built a runway
on the Tasman Plains and initiated his ski plane venture.\(^{60}\) Mount Cook Airlines - an
expansion of Wigley’s Mount Cook Company - took over flights of the Queenstown and
Mount Cook Airways Limited and offered regular flights both in and out of Mount Cook
National Park.\(^{61}\)

By the end of the 1960s tourist visitor figures were increasing dramatically, much
helped by developments in the hotel and aviation industries. A National Development
Conference was held 1969 to face a changing Britain that no longer had as great a need to

\(^{55}\) Obituary of Tony Young, *Christchurch Press*, 20 April, 2000
\(^{56}\) *NZPD*, 1956, vol. 309 p. 3272
\(^{57}\) McClure, pp. 203-238
\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 234
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 204
\(^{60}\) Thom, p. 162
\(^{61}\) Auckland International Airport History, *Highlights of New Zealand Aviation History,*
< http://www.auckland-airport.co.nz/Community/aviate.php > (20 September, 2005), NZ Aviation History
use New Zealand's agricultural exports to help it rebuild after World War II.\textsuperscript{62} Tourism was about to acquire a whole new level of importance for the national wellbeing and the Tourism Sector Report aimed at doubling their earnings within five years, and again in ten.\textsuperscript{63}

McClure notes that once the hotel industry had succeeded in attracting foreign visitors, a place to sleep and beautiful scenery no longer seemed enough to hold people in the country. More diverse entertainment had become a necessity. At Mount Cook the THC bought Glencoe Lodge in 1968 to cater for Australian tourists travelling through New Zealand on package deals. The Lodge also had a mini golf course on its front lawn.\textsuperscript{64} The THC also branched out into providing chalets below the Hermitage and thus its holdings owned all accommodation found in the National Park. Specialist mountaineering adventures in the Park were for a small, select group rather than the masses that flocked to Mount Cook. But other tourist services aimed to give the general visitor population their own Mount Cook alpine experience through Wigley's scenic flights and ski plane trips, walks to Ball Hut and onto the Tasman Glacier for guided adventures, as well as more subdued walks around the Village.

As tourism began to deliver its promise as a new national income earner, queries on the effects of national tourism on scenic destinations like National Parks had prompted a Nature Conservation Council to be formed in 1962. The Council researched into the effects of public works on any aspect of conservation and acted as a body through which conservation groups could 'communicate their views or advice on any aspects of nature conservation'.\textsuperscript{65} The Council had direct access to the Minister of Lands in advising on developments which might affect the conservation estate of New Zealand, and could also consult on the drawing up of conservation policy. This legislation marked another step in learning to define negative impacts on natural processes. While perhaps caught up in bureaucratic processes of research, the value of the Council allowed a move closer towards the goal of conservation.

\textsuperscript{63} McClure, p. 230
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 231

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The 1952 Act cemented in legislation the understanding that National Parks should primarily be places for recreation within a native setting. Mr Corbett, Minister of Lands from 1949 to 1957, spoke to his fellow MPs in a speech about the National Parks Act, stating that the legislation would govern 'the five great National Parks that comprise to a major degree the principal playing areas of New Zealand'.

Developments in the tourism industry provided the means to ‘play’ in these areas and from here on a conflict between conservation and tourists’ use of landscapes would emerge and gain further polarity with time.

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CHAPTER TWO

Privatisation and the inherent conflict between conservation and tourism

This chapter will investigate on a national scale how New Zealand arrived at a point where the launching of DOC seemed to unintentionally coincide with an economic shift to privatisation. It will explore how DOC consequently dealt with the government’s option to profit from tourists’ use of National Parks through an influx of ventures privately funded by overseas investors.

During the years of post-war boom, New Zealand tourism had worked hard at representing itself as a legitimate and thriving industry abounding with potential. However, the recipe for further financial success in the industry was to be found, amongst other things, in milking the ‘cash cow’ of scenic tourism within the major National Parks of New Zealand. The establishment of the THC in 1956 had set in motion the resurgence of government-owned hotels after years of private management, and within several years all THC hotels were operating at an internationally acceptable level. Overseas marketing intensified as the Department of Tourism drew visitors from different countries, with travel time reduced by the onset of faster aeroplanes. Links were further enhanced by the establishment of Air New Zealand in 1965.

In developing the conservation estate, the National Parks Act of 1952 had paved the way for sound management of significant landscapes, but it had also defined the two key goals of National Parks. These were to ‘preserve in perpetuity’ lands that ‘contain scenery of such distinctive quality or natural features so beautiful or unique that their preservation is in the national interest.’ In a somewhat contradictory sense, which I will explain further, preservation of these areas was to occur ‘for the benefit and enjoyment of the public’.\(^1\) With swelling tourist numbers, National Park use was growing and under the 1952 Act management systems stretched to a point of dysfunction because of a gap that had developed between the National Parks Authority and individual Park Boards.

\(^1\)NPA, 1952, section 3(1)
Confusion arose between the Authority and the Boards over who made policy and who implemented it.\(^2\)

A redefinition of Park management was sought in the revised 1980 National Parks Act. Later, in 1987, the Conservation Act was passed, transferring management to the new Department of Conservation (DOC). In 1986 Mount Cook, Fiordland and Westland National Parks had been designated World Heritage sites, committing the Parks to a new level of responsibility: preservation for the 'heritage of humankind as a whole'.\(^3\)

Economic developments of the 1980s required government departments to make changes to both their structure and their manner of operation partly to increase national revenue. Departments were divided up into 'policy-making' and 'policy-implementation' sections and their tasks narrowed to these general functions. Policy-implementation often involved having a commercial aspect and was usually achieved by creating State corporations. The idea of policy-implementation was extended down to the restructuring of conservation management in the creation of DOC which would put into action the conservation policy made by government, but had no commercial function. Because DOC operated in the role of a Government 'arm' it was subject to carrying out government desires. So, as the government moved towards commercialisation, it placed pressure on DOC's management of conservation areas. The Department found itself between 'a rock and a hard place' as it operated according to conservation management values found in the appropriate laws, but also dealt with pressure from a government-supported, capitalist tourism industry to support tourism growth.

In following a global trend to commercialise, government actions exposed an inherent conflict between the two major aims of National Parks: to preserve and yet to keep open for public use and enjoyment. How could Parks be preserved in their natural state if they were being over-run by tourists? And how could tourism continue if it was destructive for Parks, even though it was partly for the benefit of tourists that Parks existed? The answers would be found in legislation that attempted to reach compromise

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\(^2\) Thom, p. 189  
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 11, see also Department of Conservation, Royal Forest and bird Protection Society (NZ) Inc. and Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board, *Nomination of South-West New Zealand (Te Wahipounamu) by the*
for both government sectors. The ways in which these national developments affected Mount Cook National Park will be examined in the following chapter.

As summarised in Chapter One, since the establishment of the first National Park in 1894 the political priorities of New Zealand consistently alternated between promoting tourism and protecting conservation areas. An understanding within the original concept of a ‘National Park’ was that Parks would be available for both of these goals; people should use Parks, but the landscapes would still be protected from destruction so they would remain indefinitely. New Zealand tourism was highly focused around the country’s unique geography and thus the major National Parks, such as Mount Cook, became tourist icons. This was not necessarily seen as problematic because Parks were created for human interaction with the land. But a realisation came that too many people in National Parks did not leave the land in an undisturbed, natural state. Over-use did not equate to preservation in perpetuity.

In the 1952 National Parks Act both tourism and preservation were concretely stated as primary goals of the National Park framework. This was no longer just an understanding but a law-enforced objective. Preservation and tourism were thought to be able to coexist in National Parks, but the relationship between the two became problematic due to wider political and economic forces of the time. International concern for the state of the environment caused the growth of environmentalism in New Zealand at the same time that tourism became loaded with the weight of the country’s economic wellbeing.

A growing ‘environmental consciousness’ during the 1960s had reached New Zealand and initiated several environmental conferences and interest groups among the wider public. The Nature Conservation Council was established in 1962 out of a conference on the ‘Conservation of New Zealand Attractions’ in 1959. The Council was formed from independent conservation experts and gathered scientific information on

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*Jane Thomson, Origins of the 1952 National Parks Act,* (Wellington: Department of Lands and Survey for the National Parks Authority, 1974), p. 4

*Nightingale and Dingwall, p. 56*
conservation and researched into the environmental effects of proposed public works. Greenpeace New Zealand was established in 1974 and Thom mentions as significant the Environmental Conference of 1970, as well as the establishment of the Environmental Council and the Commission for the Environment in 1975. Issues of environmental protection and care became matters that everyone could be involved in while governmental decisions were more accountable to the general public.

Throughout the same period the tourism industry continued to consolidate, and New Zealand found herself with a new means to boost the economy during a period of readjustment and financial restructuring. For decades New Zealand had relied upon its agricultural exports to Britain. During the 1960s wool prices collapsed and foreign exchange generally became harder to earn. Diversification of export products and buyers was necessary, and New Zealand expanded her exports to other sectors, such as tourism.

Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973, excusing itself from buying New Zealand products. While potentially far more devastating than it was, Belich points out that Britain’s withdrawal from the New Zealand economy and the falling of prices for New Zealand’s staple commodities was combined with the first oil shock which hit that same year, leaving the local economy in a dire position. With wide public interest in conservation, and economic recession leaving the country more dependent upon tourism, the tourism industry expanded with departmental funding and the arrival of more international tourists. Questions were raised over how best to manage the nation’s tourist icons: the National Parks.

Leader of the third National Government Robert Muldoon, a conservative who preferred the old system of government control for a secure New Zealand (under the 1930s principle of an ‘insulated economy’), was faced with a situation where a liberalised

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7 Greenpeace Aotearoa/New Zealand, About Us <http://www.greenpeace.org.nz/about/default.asp> (20 September, 2005), About Us
8 Thom, p. 185
economics system (neoliberal), or the ‘New Right’s more-market’ policy in the words of Belich, seemed a better answer to combat recession.\(^\text{11}\)

Muldoon’s step towards neoliberal economics was found in his ‘Think Big’ programme, which attempted to create export industries from New Zealand’s energy resources, thus filling the gap that Britain had left in the export market, and creating jobs. The projects however ended up costing taxpayers approximately $11 billion\(^\text{12}\) and caused major changes to many New Zealand lakes and rivers through the construction of hydro-dams.

It was during the 1960s, just before Muldoon’s election as the National Government’s Minister of Finance, that an ‘unholy alliance between the Ministry of Works and the Department of Electricity’\(^\text{13}\) caused the government to sell the exclusive rights to generate power from Lake Manapouri to an Australian company, Consolidated Zinc Propriety Limited. The contract was passed into law in 1963 under the Manapouri-Te Anau Development Act. Uproar ensued as Lake Manapouri formed a central part of Fiordland National Park and the deal had been made without the consultation of the National Parks Authority.\(^\text{14}\) The Manapouri situation ‘touched a national nerve: an intuitive sense of unique New Zealand’ and ‘Save Manapouri’ campaigns were initiated everywhere, with a giant public petition being presented to the House of Representatives in 1971. The decision to sell hydro-electric rights became a political issue for the 1970s and public pressure ensured that Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau were held at their natural levels for the time being.\(^\text{15}\) People’s participation in an environmental issue had forced the government’s hand at Manapouri and the public became increasingly watchful of how Parliament dealt with natural environment-use.\(^\text{16}\)

The trend of international visitors teeming into the country continued, with Milford Sound and Mount Cook the top tourist destinations.\(^\text{17}\) Visitor numbers to National Parks between 1964 and 1980 climbed from the half-million mark in 1964 to two million in six

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp.411-413  
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 401  
\(^{13}\) Young, p. 14  
\(^{14}\) Thom, pp. 187-188  
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 189  
\(^{16}\) Young, pp. 164-168
years. Concern was growing that National Park management had not changed with the times, though visitor numbers and types of use had significantly altered since the 1950s. At Mount Cook National Park, State Highway 80 was opened in 1975 bringing mass numbers of day tourists to the Park, a sharp change from the previous situation where tourists came to stay for several days. Short-stay tourists packed the day tracks and required more village facilities like car parks and eating establishments. Their presence also created markets for new business ventures to accommodate to their needs, both inside the Park and in outer townships such as Twizel, Omarama and Tekapo.

On a national scale awareness grew that special areas of land were found everywhere and they could be defined as ‘special’ and consequently reserved for various reasons. In 1977, the government passed the Reserves Act as a way of grading the different types of reserved land so that management could be adjusted to suit each reserve’s preservation requirements. The Act classified eight types of reserves – National, Recreation, Historic, Scenic, Nature, Scientific, Government purpose, Local purpose, and Wilderness Areas. It also delegated management power to local provincial authorities, organisations and committees, for them to act as the ‘administering bodies’ of the reserves, laying out their powers and responsibilities for the role.

The different reserve classifications varied between allowing the public full open access to discouraging human entry through no provision of buildings, tracks or bridges. Wilderness Areas were places with no built features, meaning that only self-sufficient trampers could travel through them and survive. Rivers had to be crossed on foot, paths to be navigated through thick, unforgiving bush, and food had to be either carried in or found in introduced animals such as deer and possum. This type of reserve was in stark

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17 Thorn, p. 191
18 Ibid., p. 190
contrast to scenic and recreation reserves, where the main point was to encourage visitors to use the landscape and observe the scenery.

A revision of the 1952 National Parks Act was completed in 1980 with the passing of a new version, which had several amendments to fill gaps in the old legislation. The wider aim of the revised Act was to further define National Park management, and broaden the reasons for land classifications. The roles of the National Parks Authority and the Park Boards were refined to policy-making for general oversight purposes, rather than carrying out changes. Rangers were to be the implementers of policy from the Boards, Authority and Department of Lands and Survey above. 22

In an introduction to the second reading of the proposed National Parks Act, the Minister of Lands, Hon. V. S. Young, described how Park management had changed since the 1952 Act. Parks had since doubled in number, and annual visitor numbers had increased to approximately 2,500,000 people. 23 He called for the new Act to include in its administration the control of reserves and for Park and Reserve Board nominations to be extended to the general public. 24 The final draft of the Bill, which passed into Act, included several new terms added to the main objectives of National Parks, so that it now read

...the provisions of this Act shall have effect for the purpose of preserving in perpetuity as national parks, for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the public, areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems, or natural features so beautiful, unique or scientifically important that their preservation is in the national interest. 25

The use of the term 'intrinsic worth' acknowledged the view that National Park land had fundamental value through its mere existence, and not because of any extra human values ascribed to it. 26 This acknowledgement aligned the Act with the goal of

22 Thom, p. 195, see also NZS, National Parks Act, 1980, vol. 1, no. 66, sections 18, 30, 40-42
24 Ibid., p. 5353
25 NPA 1980, section 4(1). Emphasis added to show the changes to the 1952 National Parks Act
26 New Zealand Conservation Authority, General Policy for National Parks, (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 2005), p. 9
land preservation. National Park land had to be valued in its natural state simply as it was natural and special to New Zealand and so its value could never be argued out of existence. Consequently its timeless worth meant that it should never be ruined by human exploits.

The next addition of ‘use’ however did not necessarily encourage preservation of National Parks. The term further legitimised humans entering Parks and consuming the preserved landscape. Although the idea of humans using preserved land was not new, ‘use’ meant that humans could potentially have more impact on the land than ever before. The term would become more and more loaded as the economic value of Parks as tourist destinations increased and new entertainments were required. A potential reason for the addition of ‘use’ into the National Parks Act 1980 could have been to recognise traditional Maori resource use of native plants and animals. Maori potentially had the right to continue taking plants and animals from National Park land as long as it was not excessive and if they had the prior consent of the Minister of Conservation. But the Act does not differentiate between cultural groups and unfortunately the granting of this right to ‘use’ was always open to exploitation from all people.

Two other additions to section 4(1), also written in italics above, developed further the reasons why land deserved preservation. They acknowledged the complexity and ecological depth of National Park and Reserve lands. These additions also marked the first time that the significance of ecosystems was recognised in law. This recognition added to the worth of Reserves and Park land as the consequences of land misuse were better understood.

As a way of containing, and yet providing for, tourist development in National Parks and Reserves, Young also explained the addition of ‘amenities areas’ to Park classification. Amenities areas provide space for tourist facilities, accommodation and shops within National Parks but also work to contain these necessary things in a defined area. Government opposition argued that the concept of an ‘amenities area’ was still too loose and easily exploited by ambitious, greedy investors who might try to build casinos.

27 NPA 1980, section 5
28 Thorn, p. 195
in National Parks. While an extreme example, the point was made that once tourist infrastructure was certified by law in National Parks, it would never be eliminated. Under the 1980 Act, however, Park Boards were required to prepare management plans to detail their methods in both preserving the landscape and providing services for tourists. The first Mount Cook National Park management plan was published in 1981.

Despite all opposition the amendments made to the 1952 National Parks Act were passed into law under the new 1980 version, and by all accounts National Parks and Reserves were under control. The push for Fiordland, Mount Cook and Westland National Parks to gain World Heritage Status had begun in 1975 and the former two were given this new status in 1986. Several National Parks were also extended during the early 1980s.

At the end of the Muldoon Government’s term in 1984, the country entered further into a neoliberal economic system under Labour where price controls were dropped and New Zealand traders were opened up to a free market. Roger Douglas, the mastermind behind the fourth Labour Government’s radical economic restructuring, was convinced that tight Government controls and a preference for keeping everyone employed rather than creating more jobs to employ people with had left New Zealand floundering. In his reforms Douglas reorganised the public sector, intending to replace some government departments with State-owned Enterprises. This equated to dividing the public sector into commercial and policy functions and it created a highly commercial mindset in the workings of the state. Under the State-owned Enterprises Act of 1986, as Belich illustrates, the Post Office department was divided into Telecom, Postbank and New Zealand Post Corporations in 1987, three commercial arms of the state driven by policy from government departments. The Electricity Corporation of New Zealand (ECNZ) was also established. Nearly ten million acres of Crown land was transferred to the new

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30 NPA 1980, section 45
31 Thom, p. 197
33 See Brian Easton, Prologue “A Permanent Revolution” in The Whimpering of the State for an overview of the political reasoning behind Douglas’ reforms.
Land Corporation and the Forest Corporation. 35 The Forest Corporation headed the timber industry which, according to a Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society paper, was ‘mounting its last assault on the remaining unprotected publicly owned indigenous forest estate’ in 1987.36 The State-owned Enterprises Act did not change the functioning of the tourism industry, already monopolised by the government’s Tourist Hotel Corporation and with a commercial bent.

How this impacted the relationship between tourism and preservation lay in the dropping of price controls and trade restrictions. This fundamental shift in government policy encouraged new tourist ventures which exploded in number. Visitors were coming from both East and West and their expectations had to be met to continue the industry. Within National Parks the situation was similar; tourist numbers grew in an ever-diversifying market which demanded more experiences and products to satisfy expectations. Applications for guiding concessions (leases) at Mount Cook National Park swelled once privatisation kicked in and funding for tourist ventures was found overseas.37

McClure uses developments at Milford Sound to illustrate the government’s position on tourism as a means to boost the national economy. Commercialisation and private enterprise quickly crowded the Sounds with ‘glaze-eyed tourists’ and the Fiordland National Park Management Board argued that the National Parks Authority should empty the landscape and limit tourist numbers, aircrafts and crayfishers.38 The drawcard of Milford had encouraged the government to spend funding on roads into the area, and to allow the development of the small line of foreshore through land-reclamation and continuing extension of the Milford Hotel.39

36 Kevin Smith, of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. “Setbacks and Progress in the Conservation of Lowland Forests, Wetlands and Tussock Grasslands” in One Hundred Years of National Parks in New Zealand: centenary seminar, ed. Croll.
37 Ray Bellringer interview
38 McClure, p. 244
39 Ibid., pp.242-243
To the government, tourism was seen as a positive, and necessary, way of exploiting New Zealand’s best qualities with relative ease and little damage. The fourth Labour Government’s more-market oriented principle opened the flood gates for private enterprise, with private investors being involved in major tourist corporations like the THC, as well as many small private ventures entering the tourist service market. Through package deals and marketing via the South Pacific Hotel Corporation in Japan, there was an ‘upswing’ in Japanese tourist numbers, and the Hermitage Hotel employed a Japanese concierge, Kazuo Ohtake to cater for the needs of busloads full of Japanese tourists coming daily into Mount Cook. Harry Wigley’s old Mount Cook Company gained permission after seven long years to construct the Remarkables ski field in Queenstown, and his ski plane venture was still going strong in the National Park.

The restructuring of government departments during the 1980s also extended down to the creation of a new Department of Conservation (DOC) in 1987. The changes made in 1987 included the abolition of several institutions that concentrated on the environment. They were replaced by seven new administrative bodies, including the Department of Conservation. Under the Conservation Act 1987, the new Department was assigned the management of all National Parks and Reserves. These were previously managed by five different government agencies that each had priorities other than conservation. New Zealand was divided into thirteen ‘conservancies’ or conservation regions, based on national provincial boundaries, with multiple area offices in each conservancy. Mount Cook National Park came within the Canterbury Conservancy but had its own area office positioned in the Park because of its iconic status. DOC operated according to both the Conservation Act and the 1980 National Parks and 1977 Reserves Act. It took, however, several years of refining and extending the legislation before it developed into the Act we use today.

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40 Ibid., pp. 245-246
41 Ibid., pp. 256-257
42 Ibid., p. 258
The 1987 Conservation Act generally covered every aspect of conservation management in New Zealand. Many elements were originally missed out in the 1987 legislation then later added as amendments. ‘Conservation’ was defined in the Act as

[T]he preservation and protection of natural and historic resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values, providing for their appreciation and recreational enjoyment by the public, and safeguarding the options of future generations.\(^{45}\)

This word ‘conservation’ brought together the dual aims of land ‘preservation’ and ‘use’ as stated in the National Parks Act, and meant that all Park and Reserve management would be done according to the terms of conservation and not by the definition of ‘preservation’ alone. In Part II, section 6(e) the Conservation Act defined DOC management as ‘foster[ing] the use of natural and historical resources for recreation and allow[ing] their use for tourism’ as long as ‘use’ in all its forms was not inconsistent with conservation.

In 1990 vital additions were made to section 6 under ‘Functions of Department’. The National Parks Authority was replaced by the New Zealand Conservation Authority, extending the powers of the old Authority to cover all conservation areas. Membership of the Conservation Authority was similar to the Parks Authority, including government officials from Tourism, local government and Maori Affairs, members from the Royal Society and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Federated Mountain Clubs and public nominations. The Authority was made responsible to the Minister of Conservation.\(^{46}\)

On a local level, each conservancy in New Zealand was administered by a Conservation Board. The Boards were answerable to the Conservation Authority, but could advise the Authority on local conservation requirements and recommend changes to individual areas.\(^{47}\) Later amendments to Conservation Authority and Board membership in the Canterbury conservancy included requirements for both to include at

\(^{45}\) NZS, Conservation Act, 1987, vol. 1, no.65, section 2(d) interpretation
\(^{46}\) Conservation Act, 1987, section 6A, 6B-6J
\(^{47}\) Ibid, section 6L-6Q

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least two Ngai Tahu representatives once the 1998 Land Court ruling in favour of Ngai Tahu had passed through to law.48

In many ways DOC was both the implementation ‘arm’ of National Park and Conservation legislation as well as an unofficial, minor commercial ‘arm’ of the government. Under section 14 of the Conservation Act 1987, and section 17(O) in later amendments, the Department required all concessionaires in National Parks to pay rents for site use. Rents were set at market value and these funds allowed DOC conservancies to carry out conservation programmes, if government funding was inadequate. All National Park management was and is implemented according to the level of government funding received, so for a Park to obtain another source of income is beneficial to the conservation status of the area. This method of revenue generating had been a policy of National Park management since the first Act of 1952. So while there was nothing controversial in the Department charging concessionaires’ rents, it illustrates how even DOC became subject to a government increasingly interested in creating a ‘user pays’ system.

During the 1980s conservation groups raised concerns about the lack of funding directed at conservation management. If the government did not provide financially for the functioning of National Park management then Park Boards and DOC would have to look at other means of generating cost recovery, perhaps reducing the integrity of ‘free public access’ as an aim. Their other option would be to work on a very limited budget and so decrease their effectiveness in management.49

The National Government amended Section 17 in the Conservation Act in 1990 to include concession management guidelines in Part IIIB, sections 17(O)-17(ZJ). Concessions are ‘the granting of a right’, officiated by a lease, which DOC give to people wanting to operate a business or begin a building operation within National Parks and Reserves. The amendments listed all situations where concessions were and were not granted, and what was required from concession applicants to gain a lease in a Park or

49 Ken Piddington, “The National Parks of Aotearoa – New Zealand: the crown jewels or the jewels in the crown?” p. 5 in One Hundred Years of National Parks in New Zealand: centenary seminar, ed. Croll.
Reserve. Concessions were to be granted as long as the application was consistent with the strategy and aims of the area’s management plan. In practice this meant that if ‘preservation in perpetuity’ of natural environments was the overall aim of a Park or Reserve, it would be unlikely for tourist features such as casinos to be allowed as a concession, because casinos are not natural features of any area.

It is possible that the 1987 Conservation Act was established in time for the 100th anniversary of National Parks in New Zealand. Nostalgia for Te Heuheu Tukino’s gift of Tongariro and Ruapehu to the Government as a National Park encouraged a desire for conservation authorities to wholly fulfil Te Heuheu’s goals. Two new National Parks were also created in 1987, a profound move for the centenary, especially since their inclusion into the National Park areas was due to changes in the 1980 National Parks Act. Paparoa National Park on the West Coast of the South Island was formed because of additions to include areas with great ‘ecological systems’ and ‘scientific importance’ as worthy of National Park status. In the North Island Whanganui National Park covered the huge forests and river of the Wanganui Basin, as well as including the great cultural heritage of the area. National Park management had matured since Te Heuheu’s inaugural move in 1887.

In 1975 a World Heritage Convention was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and New Zealand signed the Convention in 1984. Accordingly, another great achievement for the New Zealand conservation estate came in 1986, in the form of Mount Cook and Fiordland National Parks being designated World Heritage (WH) status. A ‘World Heritage’ site is an area that has natural or cultural heritage of ‘outstanding universal value’ and it is given such a status to ensure its continued protection. If an area is nominated it must undergo an extensive evaluation process by a committee and submit a description of how it is currently managed and protected in legislation. Once Heritage status is achieved, the conservation authorities must regularly monitor and produce reports on how the

50 Conservation Act 1987, section 17W(1)
51 Thom, p. 198
principles of the WH Convention are being applied. If a WH site is destroyed, or somehow no longer maintains its special qualities, it will be removed from the WH list.\(^{53}\)

In 1986, the same year that Mount Cook and Fiordland were granted WH status, a nomination was put forward for a conglomerate of South Island National Parks, under the name of South-West (Te Wahipounamu) New Zealand, to be awarded the same status. Parks included in Te Wahipounamu were again Mount Cook and Fiordland along with Mount Aspiring and Westland National Parks. WH status was granted to South-West New Zealand in 1989.

The inclusion of New Zealand National Parks to the WH list shows that consistent exploitation of the benefits of National Parks for tourism had not over-run the conservation mindset of the nation. Achieving WH status was a means to ensure ‘preservation in perpetuity’ for the future, and the local management plans for each of the WH Parks had to incorporate the aims of the WH Convention to keep their status. Almost invalidating these benefits, however, was the fact that WH status brought with it ‘increased international prestige and tourist focus as well as increased visitor numbers and visitor impacts.’\(^{54}\) Again, good conservation management was challenged by the onset of more visitors, threatening the level of conservation achievable.

Simon Noble presented an interesting case in 1987 regarding the futility of maintaining New Zealand’s National Park status in many current Parks. His essay focussed on ‘non-preservation influences’ such as tourism in New Zealand National Parks and looked at how such influences were accepted in the country’s conservation estate and yet directly conflicted with the definition of ‘preservation’ as used to describe the major aim of New Zealand National Parks.

In examining the differences between ‘preservation’ and ‘conservation’ Noble concluded that as long as ‘preservation’ was the objective for National Park management, problems would arise in maintaining that reputation and inheritance for future


\(^{54}\) DOC, Westland/Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan 2001-2011 (Hokitika: Department of Conservation, West Coast Conservancy, 2001), pp. 55-56
generations. He quoted John Passmore's definitions of preservation and conservation in his understanding of non-preservation influences in National Parks. 'Preservation' was defined as "maintain[ing] in their present condition such areas of the earth's surface as to not yet bear the obvious marks of man's [sic] handiwork." 'Conservation' on the other hand is "...only the saving of natural resources for later consumption." His solution to the quandary of 'preservation' in a conservationist society was the complete separation of 'use' and 'preservation' in National Park classification. Parks that were still untouched by humans should be defined as 'wilderness areas' with tourist entry largely refused and discouraged.

It might, however, be understood from Noble's essay that 'preservation' could never be a true option for New Zealand. His two main non-preservationist influences were the rapid growth of the tourism industry and the influence of a market philosophy, both of which were global trends and thus were forces larger than the extent of DOC's control. Tourism was loaded with great economic importance during the 1980s, gaining weight as it was used to boost the national economy on the understanding that exploitation of the tourism sector would generate a high national income. Through a process of 'trickle-down' the national earnings would eventually provide higher living standards for the public. DOC also understood that the dual aims of 'use' and 'preservation' had always been a part of New Zealand's environmental comprehension and so to eliminate one of these would destroy a national cultural heritage.

As the new conservation authority, DOC quickly had to establish itself to cope with the pressure of tourism, and fulfil other requirements of its comprehensive mandate under the Conservation Act. In 1987 a Centenary Seminar (on the celebrations of New Zealand National Parks 100th anniversary) was held where various conservation experts, tertiary

55 Noble, p. 45 See how this argument directs at the Conservation Act aim to 'safeguard the options of future generations'.
56 Passmore, p. 213, in Simon Noble, "National Parks in New Zealand: Conservation or Preservation?” p. 16
57 Noble, p. 26
58 Ibid., p. 20
59 Ibid., p. 26
60 DOC, Visitor Strategy (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 1995) Part 2.1

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level lecturers and Tourism Department representatives gathered to discuss the future of National Parks and Reserves and DOC management.

A discussion paper by Dr P. J. Devlin, of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at Lincoln College, stated that, taken to its extreme conclusion, natural ecosystems can best survive with the complete exclusion of humans. Rather than suggesting that this be the best method of preservation for New Zealand, Devlin talked of people acting with 'environmental integrity' and prioritising 'concern for the resource...over concern for the resource-user.' Further discussion in a workshop on National Park management principles stated that Park Boards and the Conservation Department would need to be resolute in their refusal of development schemes that would compromise National Park values. DOC, as protectors of National Park values, would have to prioritise Devlin's 'concern for resource' if user-pressure on Parks was to be held at bay.

While conservation experts had gathered to discuss the future of New Zealand's National Park system, the country was on the verge of experiencing the full effects of Rogernomics. Severe global economic downturn forced New Zealand to sell major state asset to carry her through. Private ownership entered New Zealand in a way that would significantly influence the direction of DOC's National Park management strategy.

In 1987 the stock market crashed and the Labour Government experienced three leadership changes in quick succession leading right up to the 1990 election. Divisions between Labour Government leader David Lange and Minister of Finance Roger Douglas over the extremity of 'Rogernomics' caused Douglas to be dismissed during Labour's second term. Douglas had initiated the sale of state assets to alleviate national debt and to place commercial ownership into the hands of those best able to handle them – private investors. Economic policies directed at privatisation and asset sales continued despite Douglas' exit as Finance Minister, negative economic growth and high unemployment.

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61 P. J. Devlin, “The Changing Role of Interpretation in New Zealand Parks” p. 7, in One Hundred Years of National Parks in New Zealand: centenary seminar, eds. Croll
62 Evan Alty, Workshops Report “Understanding the Conservation Act” in One Hundred Years of National Parks in New Zealand: centenary seminar, eds. Croll
during a period of recession. During these years, competition let loose as private enterprise rooted itself through 'Rogernomics', encouraging businessmen and bankers to attract offshore investors into new ventures.64

The tourism industry experienced a sharp downturn after 1987, going from New Zealand's largest foreign-exchange earner to experiencing a 'bust' as travel to New Zealand became more expensive, and incoming visitor numbers slowed. To relieve the THC of failing enterprises, the government sold Wanaka and Franz Josef hotels, and in 1988 announced the sale of the entire THC chain as a way of reducing national debt.65 This was part of Douglas' privatisation scheme, and the Tourism Hotel Corporation traded for $73.85 million66, being sold to the South Pacific Hotels Corporation (SPHC) in 1990.67

Two years later, the National Party stormed the polls in the 1990 election with its biggest victory over Labour. This election also saw the entrance of the Green Party to Parliament with seven percent of the national vote, bringing an environmental voice directly into government. The National Government promised to tone down the economic changes brought in by Labour, but National Finance Minister Ruth Richardson favoured policy similar to that of Roger Douglas and so state asset sales continued. During the 1990s the National Government did contribute to the management of the conservation estate, specifically in terms of encouraging good resource use and sustainability. The Resource Management Act was passed in 1991. It focused on sustainable management of natural and physical resources to safeguard them for future generations, to protect the 'life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems' and avoid, fix or ease harmful

65 McClure, p. 260
67 Ray Bellringer interview
effects of activities on the environment.\textsuperscript{68} C. Milne outlines the main purpose of the Act as placing the focus 'upon the effects of activities rather than the activities themselves.'\textsuperscript{69}

Another feature of the Resource Management Act was a principle of 'user pays' as a measure to ensure resource sustainability. This drew a parallel with the introduction of private ownership in tourist ventures. Noble used the term 'user pays: user says' to illustrate how privatisation and an influx of new ventures and tourists caused the pressure on conservation management to provide more tourist facilities.

While conservation and environmental management had been reorganised and well defined over the 1970-1990 period the most significant, and in many ways the most adverse change had been the shift to privatisation. It marked a new era where the government had increasingly less control on how sectors like tourism functioned, and where the desire for a stronger economy worked at odds with the original aims of the conservation movement. With foreign ownership dictating the future directions of the tourist industry, pressure to commercialise tested the management of New Zealand’s environment.

The Department of Tourism became the New Zealand Tourism Department in 1990, when the government sold the ‘publicity, travel sales and business functions’ to private enterprise.\textsuperscript{70} In 1991 the Department was replaced with the New Zealand Tourism Board. Although now trading under a new name - Tourism New Zealand, it is a Crown entity, meaning that it is legally separate from the Crown, although the Crown has ‘a controlling interest through ownership mechanisms.’\textsuperscript{71} The Crown owns the majority of voting shares and has the power to replace members of the body. Tourism New Zealand now acts as an ‘international marketing body for New Zealand’\textsuperscript{72} and between 1992 and 2001, annual international tourist figures grew from 1 million to 1.8 million under the

\textsuperscript{68} NZS, \textit{Resource Management Act}, 1991, vol. II, no. 69, section 5(1)-(2c)
\textsuperscript{69} C. Milne, \textit{Handbook of Environmental Law}, (Wellington: Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand: GP Publications, 1992), p. 34
\textsuperscript{70} Tourism New Zealand, \textit{100\% Pure Progress: 1901-2001, Tourism New Zealand, one hundred years of New Zealand tourism}, (Wellington: Tourism New Zealand, 2001), p. 11
\textsuperscript{72} Tourism New Zealand, p. 11
new global marketing campaign ‘100% Pure New Zealand’.

A 2010 strategy for Tourism New Zealand was published in 2001, which took into consideration the high national value of tourism and also the impact of tourist activities on the environment. The Strategy consequently ‘task[ed] the tourism industry with addressing the implications of tourism growth and how this growth can best be managed at a sustainable level for our country.’

Throughout the 1990s, conservation management increasingly had to negotiate with a tourism industry that was focussing on international marketing. The concept that National Parks could be used for tourism while being preserved in their natural state was set in legislation although DOC realised that prioritising ‘preservation’ would perhaps achieve more balance between the dual goals of National Park management. Throughout recent years DOC and Tourism New Zealand have worked together to find ways of sustainable use at national tourist icons like Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. Negotiation, however, does not eliminate problems and as tourism continues to increase, it places further pressure on how DOC is to maintain that balance between ‘preservation’ and ‘use’.

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73 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE
Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park today

This chapter will look at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park as a case study of the developments in conservation management and in the privatisation of tourism. DOC management of Mount Cook National Park had to deal with maintaining a vigorous tourism site as well as keeping both their National Park and World Heritage Status through preservation. In many ways tourists’ expectations of Mount Cook direct the pace and course of development at the Park. If there were no services to facilitate peoples’ National Park experiences then only one of the twin goals of the Park ethos would be met – that of ‘preservation’. But in the current situation, with pressure from a changing tourism industry to provide more ways to enjoy the Park, DOC deal with a potential problem of ‘use’ dominating ‘preservation’ and constant negotiation is required to find a balance between the two. While the Conservation Act encourages public ‘use’ of National Parks, it also states that DOC should foster use for recreation, but only allow tourism.¹

DOC’s efforts at coordinating both tourism and preservation have resulted in the Mount Cook Village being designated an ‘amenities area’ in 1999, committing it as the tourist service centre of the Park. This left the rest of the National Park to be defined as a ‘natural environment’ and thus spelt out the maintenance of its natural state. In 1993 DOC and the Hillary Commission developed a tool for recreation planning called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.² This officially classified recreation areas in relation to how visitors used them and helped DOC understand what facilities were then needed for each area. The consequent designation of the Mount Cool Village as an ‘amenities area’ was based upon the ROS system. The 1981 and 1989 Mount Cook Management Plans will be discussed according to how DOC interpreted the National Parks Act specifically for Mount Cook, and how they have negotiated the pressure of tourism upon the Park while still enabling tourism to provide a valuable service to the area.

¹ DOC, Visitor Strategy, Part II, section 6(e)
² DOC, “How does DOC Analyse Recreation Opportunities”, Recreation Opportunities Review, 2004
By 1984, Mount Cook National Park was accommodating approximately 190,000 annual visitors. Thirty percent of these visitors were New Zealanders and the other seventy percent came from overseas.³ The focal point of tourism at Mount Cook remained the panorama of New Zealand’s highest peak and surrounding Alps. But general tourists would not come unless there was a high level of service and safety available, consequently the second most important aspect of the Park was the Village area and the tourist facilities provided by the THC for accommodation and dining. The Hermitage Hotel, version four built in 1958, provided the superior level of accommodation with direct views of Mount Cook and several later extensions to the complex.⁴ Glencoe Lodge was privately built in 1965 to accommodate Australian tourist package deals, but the THC bought the business several years later. The THC built numerous self contained cabins in the 1970s to provide for families and large groups. A Youth Hostel and a camping ground site at White Horse Hill were also made available.

Outside of basic accommodation facilities, the other drawcard of the Park was its scenery and the ability for tourists to have their own alpine experience. Tourist services extended to ski plane trips to the Tasman Glacier, guided walks along the Hooker Valley, bus links to Ball Hut, skiing on the lower reaches of the Tasman Glacier, walks to Mount Sebastopol, Red Tarns, Sealy Tarns and up higher on the Sealy Range to Mueller Hut as well as smaller tracks around the village bush. The Village offered a tennis court, a mini golf course, gardens, and there were proposals for the THC to build a public tavern and shops. The Park Board planned to construct a community hall and school for staff and their families. These plans eventuated in the 1980s and 1990s. The Helicopter Line began operating in 1986 from Glentanner with a concession lease to land in the Park mountains. Their flights took visitors high into the Alps with landings on the upper reaches of the Fox Glacier.⁵ Guided climbing in the Park was also renowned for its success and quality of service.

⁵ Ray Bellringer interview
The desires of tourists further dictated the types of services provided at Mount Cook National Park once State Highway 80 opened in 1975 linking Mount Cook with the Mackenzie Country road network. The Park saw a 'marked increase' in the number of day visitors who had limited time to experience attractions. A lack of time confined tourist pressure to the Mount Cook Village as people used hotel facilities for dining and car parking, as well as filling the short walk tracks. The opportunity to visit Mount Cook for the day also allowed people of a lower economic status to afford what previously was reserved for those with the money for a lengthy stay in the Park. This influx of people created markets for new businesses to operate in, with possibilities only constrained by a lack of space in the village area and a need for the approval of the Mount Cook National Park Board.

Today, much has changed within the Village area in terms of accommodation and visitor facilities. The development of a separate residential area for permanent staff, and local community facilities went ahead, built on the Birch Stream fan. The Hermitage has expanded with a 60-room addition as well as major refurbishments throughout the hotel. Most of the commercial aspects of the Park are now either located within the Hermitage complex or at Glencoe Lodge rather than scattered along different sites. A large geotechnical flood protection project has been completed to channel stream water safely through the Village. Oxidation ponds are also situated within the Park, just beyond the Village.

With external forces encouraging a diverse range of tourists to visit Mount Cook, DOC management of the Park has had to prioritise development especially within the Village area. The ROS system pin-pointed the kinds of facilities required for each aspect of the Park. Increasing tourist numbers, especially from day visitors, has created a real need for efficient parking space in a site already constricted by space within its current boundaries. The Village was given 'amenities area' status in 1999 to provide room for visitor facilities in the Park in a way that still complies with the dual National Park goals. In the 1997 Issues and Options Report there are forty nine concessionaires operating in

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6 MCNPMP, 1981, Introduction
7 Ibid., fig. 2, Mount Cook Village Map: existing and planned development
the Park, and approximately nine of those are based within the Village area, with the rest based outside of the Park, but using the land.\(^8\)

Since the 1980 National Parks Act, Park management was carried out according to management plans, written in mind of each Park’s individual needs. Plans were to be written by Park Boards every ten years and their function was to interpret the National Parks Act specifically for each Park. So in this situation, the management plan would develop the aims of the Act in ways that could be carried out in Mount Cook National Park.\(^9\)

The 1981 Mount Cook National Park Management Plan recognised the need for restrictions to be placed on development in the village area because of its position as a base for National Park and alpine activities, a service centre for visitors and a significant attraction in its own right.\(^10\) The plan stated that much of the Park was only usable by specialist climbers, with the general public being ‘confined to the floors of the Tasman and Hooker Valleys, where there are roads, tracks and accommodation.’\(^11\) The extreme volatility of the Park landscape was another natural restriction to visitor use and development for tourism. Avalanches, landslips and flooding were and still are common threats to particular areas of the Park, preventing tourist development from occurring. Thus, the majority of user-pressure would be contained within the Village area and facilities development could get out of control unless well managed.

With the focus of Mount Cook Park management being concentrated mainly on the Village area and its surrounding foot hills, the 1981 plan adopted two of the standard Park land classifications from the National Parks Authority. The Village area and the airport were designated as ‘Facilities Areas’ (the predecessor of ‘amenities areas’) to ensure the provision of services for visitors ‘with minimum interference to the natural features’. No other Facilities Areas would be created in the Park.\(^12\) The other classification was ‘Natural Environment Area’ given to the rest of the Park beyond the

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\(^8\) Ernst and Young, *Mount Cook/Aoraki Village Development Issues and Options Report*, (Wellington: Ernst and Young, 1997), p. 41
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 39
\(^10\) Ibid., section 3.4.1 The Village
\(^11\) Ibid., section 3.2.1 Public Use
\(^12\) Ibid., section 3.4.2
Facilities Areas. The latter category ensured that the Park would be maintained "predominantly in its natural state but where tracks, bridges and outlying huts may be provided for the use and enjoyment of the natural environment and for public safety."\(^{13}\)

The 1981 plan also regulated Village developments by placing architectural controls on the Village area to ensure buildings were compatible with the natural environment of the Park. Landscape development was defined along the same principle, so that natural features of the area were accentuated. Concessions management was one of the key issues, and another way of controlling the development of the Village area. Concession applications had to agree with the ideals of National Parks in their provided service\(^{14}\); to encourage "preservation in perpetuity" while supplying recreation. Only staff essential to concession operations were allowed to live within the Village, and in designated accommodation away from the commercial area. The 1981 plan also had policy on Village car parking. The Village was to be pedestrian based and parking areas provided to stop haphazard car parking outside of the Village boundaries.\(^{15}\) In order for the National Park aims to be met at Mount Cook, "Park interpretation" displays were to be used to inform visitors about the history of the area and Park values.

Policy on aircraft movements and developments was also included in the plan. The Board expected that air traffic over the Park would increase with time and wanted to minimise the disturbance caused by planes. Takeoffs and landings were restricted to certain sites and concessionaire flying was kept to a sole operator. Helicopters were not allowed within the Park.\(^{16}\)

Since 1956, and at the time of the 1981 management plan, the THC held the monopoly on tourist services within Mount Cook National Park. After taking over Glencoe Lodge during the late 1960s, the THC also built a cluster of motels in land below the Hermitage to accommodate families and large groups. They also bought fifty one percent of the shares in Alpine Guides from the Mount Cook Company, and thus gave the sole guiding company protection under the THC's domination of tourist

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\(^{13}\) Ibid., sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.5-4.5.2  
\(^{14}\) Ibid., section 3.4.4  
\(^{15}\) Ibid., section 3.4.7  
\(^{16}\) Ibid., section 3.2.3
services. Because Alpine Guides were owned by the THC they were given ‘residency’ status and could automatically base their headquarters within the National Park Village. The guiding concession to Mount Cook was a lucrative one and many private individuals tried to gain the concession from Alpine Guides during the 1980s. However, when the Board reviewed new guiding concession applications, the economic impact on Alpine Guides had to be considered because it was the resident operator. Because of the competition a second resident guiding company would bring, their applications for resident status were thus generally declined in consideration of the limited market that Alpine Guides was working with.\textsuperscript{17} If new guiding applications were accepted then they were not allowed to have their base in the Park. An independent guiding company was established in Twizel, called the Three Bs, which survived for a time and then failed due to the market domination of Alpine Guides. Another guiding company called Alpine Recreation was finally set up which also tussled with Alpine Guides for business and struggled because they did not have residency status, giving them no priority over the market.\textsuperscript{18}

Concern for the environmental pressure of multiple guiding concessions operating in the Park was perhaps a reason why DOC sanctioned Alpine Guides’ monopoly in the 1989 management plan. But the THC and the Mount Cook Group (both of whom ruled the tourist services at Mount Cook) were powerful companies led by highly influential businessmen. The THC especially had political clout, given that it was a state Corporation, which dominated its position in the National Park. The clause restricting the guiding concession to one resident operator was removed from the most recent management plan (2004) because in forcing other guiding companies to base themselves outside of the Park the clause was thwarting competition. The monopoly of Alpine Guides under the protection of the THC was in direct conflict to the Commerce Act which stated that there had to be competition amongst businesses. With competition amongst guiding companies at Mount Cook being largely denied, cases like these were taken to the Commerce Commission. Guiding concession applications are now accepted providing they comply with the Concessions policy in the 1987 Conservation Act and the

\textsuperscript{17} See \textit{MCNPMP}, 1989, p. 68 for an explanation of this clause
\textsuperscript{18} Ray Bellringer interview
general philosophy of the Park. Development proposals in the 1981 plan for the THC to build souvenir and grocery shops near Glencoe Lodge were completed and then the stores were later diverted to the Hermitage Hotel. Alpine Guides moved from their base in the Hermitage into the old THC shop buildings. The community tavern was also built and then closed down by DOC in 1999 and turned into their visitor centre.

Park Board management of Mount Cook National Park had run fairly smoothly during the 1980s, and to meet the end of the current management plan’s lifetime in 1991, a new Review plan was published in 1986. This Review plan and its official version in 1989 elaborated on the 1981 original, and gave a concise analysis of the state of the Park and the natural and human processes operating there. That same year Mount Cook National Park was awarded World Heritage Status, giving further impetus to preserving the Park’s natural qualities through extensive management. The new 1989 plan was the first produced by the Department of Conservation.

The 1987 Conservation Act was specifically important for Mount Cook National Park in regards to its management. DOC was established nationally as the new conservation authority and placed locally within Mount Cook National Park. The Park Board Rangers were employed by DOC to carry out administration, track and hut repairs and pest control in the Park. DOC gained control of all the lease agreements with concessionaires and developed comprehensive policies by which to select new applications and manage existing leases.

As the conservation estate passed into the control of DOC, wider New Zealand also moved into the Rogernomics policy of international economic exposure, state asset sales and the dropping of price controls. Privately owned business ventures became more economically viable and this was expressed in the increased number of concession applications received at Mount Cook. As stated previously, guiding concessions were popular, and DOC continued to receive more into the 1990s. Alpine Recreation Canterbury and Southern Alps Guiding both began operating as non resident guiding

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
companies in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{22} Within two years of DOC’s establishment, the Government initiated their plans to sell state assets, using the sale money to decrease national debt that had been building up since the Muldoon era. The THC was one of several State Corporations sold to foreign companies and went to the American owned South Pacific Hotels Corporation for $73.85 million in 1990. Under the 1981 and 1989 Mount Cook National Park management plans, the THC-owned area in the Village was excluded from the total Village lease boundary. Businesses within the lease area were required to pay concession fares and rents to the Crown for the privilege of operating in the Park. But because the THC was not a part of the lease area, they were not operating under a concession and did not have to pay rents or fees to the Crown.\textsuperscript{23} When the THC was sold by the Government, DOC reorganised the lease area to include the former THC-owned land.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, SPHC and all further owners of the Hermitage and its adjoining facilities were held under their own individual lease system, requiring them to submit to the Mount Cook management plans in all new developments and pay concessionaire fees.

Combined political and economic forces of this time bought change to the tourist situation DOC had to manage at Mount Cook in addition to the private investments in the Hotel. Changing tourist types were entering the Park as the Tourism Department advertised in Europe and their relations with SPHC contributed to the opening up of the Japanese market. The Hermitage and guiding companies had to extend their range of products and services to cater for both Europeans and a very different Japanese culture with an older travelling demographic that preferred passive tourist activities. Alpine Guides began hiring Japanese staff to take walking parties of middle-aged to elderly Japanese tourists along the main Valley tracks. Menus were remodelled for the Japanese palate and souvenir ranges were extended in the shops. Tour bus drivers were required to take short Japanese language courses to assist them in transporting tourists around the country.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} MCNPMP Review, 1986, p. 104. Discussed in Ray Bellringer interview, see also MCNPMP, 1989, p. 104, and Fig. 4 for THC control area boundary
\textsuperscript{24} Ray Bellringer interview
\textsuperscript{25} McClure, p. 257
Because of the opening of State Highway 80 to Mount Cook in 1975, a visitor trend began at the Park whereby people came for day trips or short stays of one night. Visitors focussed their trip on using the Village facilities and taking day walks or flights onto the glaciers. The 1989 management plan acknowledged the need for a balance between preservation and use at Mount Cook. With more Village services required to meet demand, there was potential for built facilities to intrude on the scenic attractions and ruin the natural environment, as well as a danger that natural hazards could destroy the built areas as happened to the first Hermitage in 1911.

As a measure to combat Village development extruding over the rest of the Park the 1989 plan significantly requested that the classification of ‘amenities area’ to be added to the Mount Cook village area and the airport so that the priority of public use could be carried out and yet contained in two places. This classification was pivotal to DOC’s balancing of the two National Park goals – ‘use’ and ‘preservation’. The 1980 National Parks Act defined ‘amenities areas’ as ‘a mechanism to provide for a situation which may be inconsistent with the general principles of National Parks’, because ‘use’ was being prioritised over ‘preservation’. ‘Amenities area’ classification for Mount Cook Village would ensure that tourist facilities would be a feature of the Park and that the provision of those facilities would be the main priority of the Village area, over-riding policy for natural preservation. This had potential to create dissonance between the management and development of Mount Cook National Park and the National Parks Act according to which it was to be governed. However, ‘amenities areas’ are numerically few throughout New Zealand National Parks and Reserves and were only given to sites in extraordinary circumstances. Classification of Mount Cook Village as an ‘amenities area’ was beneficial in that the rest of the National Park (some 70,000 hectares) would be free of all tourist development and would meet the ‘preservation’ purpose of the National Parks.

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26 Ernst and Young, pp. 48-51, MCNPMP, 1989, p. 18
27 MCNPMP, 1989, p. 12
28 Ibid, p. 19
29 Ibid, p. 12
Act. The gazettal of Mount Cook Village as an ‘amenities area’ was passed in July 1999.\textsuperscript{30}

The effects of greater and more demanding visitor numbers ramified to change the environment. A major concern for all future developments within the Village area was the threat of massive land movements through flooding. Before further tourist developments could occur in the Village, the area had to be rendered safe by stream channels and stop banks – a high priority for early DOC management.\textsuperscript{31} The 1989 management plan expected to begin flood protection work within its lifetime and be completed by the due date of the next plan in 2004. This work was to have a large effect on the development of Mount Cook Village as an ‘amenities area’ as many concession applications for businesses were forced to review their plans and hold off construction until all engineering work was completed in 1999. The effects of increased tourism pressure were deferred until flood protection work was completed and building plans were restarted.\textsuperscript{32}

Another management issue for the 1989 plan was aircraft control. With the scenic flight service growing in popularity, the value of having this concession operating was significant to ensure tourists had good experiences in the Park. Flights enabled visitors to experience the alpine nature of Mount Cook first-hand, something not possible for the inexperienced. Planes were also used in search and rescue operations and to place climbers and equipment in the mountains.\textsuperscript{33} DOC wished to restrict local airport use to one concessionaire so that flights and their impact on the area could be easily monitored. Helicopters also had to operate outside of the Park boundaries. Having one resident flight concessionaire meant that the Mount Cook flights and skiplanes were profitable but competition was found in other flight services operating from the West Coast, Twizel or Queenstown. Everyone landing in the Park mountains had to apply for concession although, as more scenic flight operations began, aircraft noise became problematic for its effect on ground visitor experiences. The airport was also recommended for ‘amenities

\textsuperscript{30} DOC, \textit{Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan Draft}, (Christchurch: DOC: Canterbury Conservancy, 2001), section 2.1.1
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{MCNMP}, 1989, p. 11
\textsuperscript{32} Ray Bellringer interview
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{MCNMP}, 1989, p. 10
area’ classification to control aircraft operations. The 1989 management plan directed DOC administration at Mount Cook National Park throughout the 1990s. Issues laid out in the plan were dealt with, or resolution had begun and was continued up until very recently. Several new development projects around the Hermitage Hotel were also completed during these years.

A major force of private enterprise entered the Village area during the lifetime of the 1989 management plan. Originally made possible by state asset sales, in 1995 SPHC sold the Hermitage, along with a hotel at Rotorua and the Waitomo hotel and caves venture, to Tourism Holdings Ltd. Tourism Holdings, together with partner, Trojan Holdings Ltd, had shares in another company called Tourism Milford Ltd. Tourism Milford specifically took over the ownership of the Hermitage, working under its two parent companies. Like the THC and SPHC before, Tourism Milford still owns one of the most significant concession leases in the Park. Another significant concession application in the mid-1990s was for the construction of the Old Mountaineers Café and Bar. According to Ray Bellringer, Aoraki/Mount Cook DOC Programme Manager, Community Relations (responsible for Village Special Projects/Concessions/Biodiversity) the process for the Old Mountaineers was a long one, obstructed by geotechnical work in the Village, development reassessment by the Mount Cook community in 1997 and the Mackenzie District Council refusing to give building consents until the Village was structurally safe from flooding. The Old Mountaineers Café and Bar was finally opened in 2002 and has since provided another dining option for Park visitors. The owners also run Southern Alps Guiding, taking tourists on glacier kayaking trips and climbing expeditions in the mountains.

During the 1990s, the flood protection work for the Village, as recommended in the 1989 management plan, was finished in 1999 and cost $2 million at its completion.

35 Ray Bellringer interview
36 Ibid, see also DOC, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan, August, 2004,
Tourism Milford paid for the project as the main part of flood protection was for their property. They set up a private company in 1998 to manage the $2 million loan, and all concessionaires were charged a fee for benefiting from the engineering that contributed to paying for the infrastructure. All concession building proposals were placed on hold until this work had finished, resulting in a delay of pressure upon Village tourism development. Once the flood protection work was finished, and building consents were reissued, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park experienced considerably more concession activity.37 In 1999 Tourism Holdings sold its shares in the Hermitage Hotel to its partner Trojan Holdings so it could expand into the tourist transport market. Trojan Holdings also purchased Milford Track and Alpine Guides in the deal, worth $20 million.38 Two years later Tourism Holdings also sold the Mount Cook Ski planes venture to private South Island interests.39 The most recent development at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park has been the construction of a new backpacker’s accommodation facility opposite the DOC Visitor Centre.

To find direction and balance for the Mount Cook Village in the midst of new development potential and the desire to maintain a natural state, the Village Development Steering Group (VDSG) completed a Mount Cook/Village Development Issues and Options Report, published by Ernst and Young in 1997. The Report projected the future of the Village if current circumstances continued. Three viable options for future Village development were then proposed, while still allowing the area to comply with all Park management goals. In line with the 1989 plan proposal for ‘amenities’ classification, the VDSG recommended that the Village be the focus of the ‘use’ goal with the rest of the Park prioritising ‘preservation’. The Report saw the importance of the Village area to the status of Mount Cook National Park. If tourist facilities were removed from the Park to best preserve the area then Mount Cook would cease to be an iconic destination. To keep
the Park popular for tourists, yet maintain its National Park and World Heritage status, the Village area provided a perfect, confined place to assist visitors in their Mount Cook experience through offering basic commercial and recreational services. The three options for the future Village were to expand development outside of current Village boundaries, to expand development within current boundaries, or a combination of both. So far, no further developments have been made outside of the existing boundaries, although the possibility remains open.

Currently DOC is experiencing a surge in private developments within the Village area. This has the potential to create tourism opportunities, bringing more people and to consequently degrade the National Park environment through overdevelopment and use. The Hermitage Hotel, Glencoe Lodge and all accompanying staff accommodation is owned by Tourism Milford Limited, operating under its parent company Trojan Holdings. The main guiding concession in Aoraki/Mount Cook is still Alpine Guides with their long history of successful guiding in the area, but several other independent ventures are operating with an increasingly bigger market for adventure tourism. The YHA is operating on the Black Birch fan, supplying the needs of back packers to the Park. The Old Mountaineers Café and Bar is looking at developing their own accommodation facilities, and there are plans to add more rooms to the Hermitage in the near future. The Hermitage Hotel complex now has 272 beds, with future development ideas centring on another 200-bed addition.

A new Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan draft was completed in 2001 with the final version published in 2004 with the purpose of mitigating the effects of tourism development on the Park’s preservation status. The plan is also based on the trend of visitor use headed towards day or short-stay visitors. Thus concessionaires will likely provide passive tourist services for a mostly international market. The management plan also includes Ngai Tahu and their tangata whenua cultural values held in the Aoraki/Mount Cook region as recognised by the Crown from 1998. Any further

40 Ray Bellringer interview
41 AMCNPMP, 2004, section 2.1.1
42 After a ten year process, Ngai Tahi was finally awarded a settlement in 1998 for their tribal claim to parts of the South Island, including Mount Cook. The peak itself is considered an ancestor of the tribe, who call it 'Aoraki', meaning 'cloud-piercer'. Under the Ngai Tahu Settlement Claims Act 1998, Mount Cook

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developments in the Park have to be sanctioned by Ngai Tahu. World Heritage Status still applies to the National Park, including the Village with its ‘amenities area’ status. Consequently DOC aims to encourage the growth of natural flora and fauna in the Village and to minimise the effects of structural developments and screen village buildings. World Heritage conservation standards are met through informing visitors of the area’s heritage values at the DOC visitor centre and with signs around the Park. Facilities such as day shelters, tracks and camping grounds are provided to minimise the human impact on the natural environment. In terms of public tracks around the National Park, several areas have become increasingly dangerous as the landscape changes through glacial recession. The decision was made to keep the Wakefield track closed for visitor safety and the Copland Pass track now requires trampers to be accompanied by a guide and/or to carry alpine snow equipment. Several alpine huts deep in the Tasman and Hooker Valleys are being relocated, as glacial recession is making them unstable and useless for technical climbing in their current positions.

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park has developed into a highly specialised National Park where the main focus of activity is centred on the Village area. Both tourist numbers and types have changed over the years. In 2001 annual visitor figures had increased beyond 250,000. The growth rate continues today. The majority of current visitors are short stop visitors who prefer passive tourist experiences and keep their activities to the main Hooker and Tasman Valleys. Guided tours are provided for nearly all activities.

The range of concessionaires has increased from the days of THC monopolies on accommodation and guiding. Plans to increase accommodation facilities are in the midst of the concession process, but will add approximately 250 more beds to the Village area, with 200 of them potentially within a new wing of the Hermitage Hotel and the rest in

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National Park experienced a change of name to include the Maori version of ‘Aoraki’. Ngai Tahu is included in all Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park development and managerial issues.

43 DOC, Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan Draft, section 6.1.2b
44 Ibid., section 1.3.4.2 ‘South West (Te Wahipounamu) World Heritage Area’
45 DOC, Canterbury Conservancy recreation opportunities review: submissions analysis and decisions, (Christchurch: DOC: Southern Regional Office, 2004) pp. 3-4
46 AMCNPMP, 2004, section 1.3.5
private ventures. Guided walking and climbing operations are run by about thirty concessionaires, as well as heliskiing operations.\textsuperscript{47}

DOC management of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park is comprehensive and over the last twenty years has closed many loop holes, and placed restrictions on activities that might allow exploitation of the commercial Village area and destruction of the wider National Park. An issue of commercial space in the Village is the most current problem facing DOC, but Programme Manager Ray Bellringer confirmed that once all commercial site space is taken up by ventures, then it is a possibility that DOC will let no further concessions in until old concession leases expire and space reopens.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Ernst and Young, p 41
\textsuperscript{48} Ray Bellringer interview
CONCLUSION

The current relationship between DOC and privately owned tourist operators within National Parks is one of constant negotiation. The twin goals of National Park ‘preservation’ and ‘use’ have been officially sanctioned under the 1980 National Parks Act and DOC is charged with the implementation of these goals according to the 1987 Conservation Act. Consequently DOC management of National Parks becomes a ‘balancing act’ of preserving land while facilitating people’s use through recreation and tourism. However much these two goals of National Park management are at odds with each other, DOC will have to continue the provision of both as long as they are tied together under the same legislation.

Tourism in New Zealand continues to be seen as a great money making venture, but there have long been warning signs about the land degradation that New Zealand’s style tourism can cause. The attraction of New Zealand still centres upon the untouched appeal of the landscape, but as our national drawcard is exploited to bring foreign money into the country, the untouched-ness quickly becomes spoiled with human imprints. Evidence of this is being seen at Milford Sound where overcrowding is a significant problem.

While Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park is not in the same position as Milford Sound, the entrance of development and construction into the Village area has only encouraged more and many different tourist activities and services are now provided. Once public facilities are established in the Park they become loaded with economic importance because they are the features that enable tourists to enjoy the area. The economic value of having tourist facilities gives reason for the Park’s existence in its current state. In the 1997 Issues and Options Report DOC stated their belief that if tourist facilities were eliminated from the village area then the Park would cease to be a popular destination and people would not benefit as much from its existence. Hence one of the two major objectives for New Zealand National Parks would not be met at Aoraki/Mount Cook - people would not be able to benefit or enjoy the extreme landscape because they could not necessarily access it.
In the current 2004 management plan, DOC believe that the Village area has a definite role as an entrance to the Park, providing the information and equipment for people to go out and experience the mountain environment. Over the years there has been a trend towards visitors requiring activities tailored to suit their physical abilities. For instance, many visitors to the Park are elderly and are not always physically capable of climbing the surrounding mountains. Hence, guides are provided to take tours around the valley floors of the area. Other tourists want to have an ‘alpine’ experience but lack the mountaineering skills to get there. Consequently, scenic flights on planes or helicopters, or ski plane adventures are now provided, as well as personal guided climbing trips for those capable. International visitors make up seventy percent of all tourists to the Park, and so staff with multi-lingual skills are employed to meet their needs. This means that the tourist services provided at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park are constantly being tailored to the needs and wants of the majority.

In my conversations with Ray Bellringer, DOC Programme and Community Relations Manager at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, he pointed out that Aoraki/Mount Cook is different to other National Parks because of its alpine nature. If the tourist options did not meet all visitor expectations, it is possible that they can find what they want in other Parks around New Zealand.

Simon Noble’s thesis on the problems of the New Zealand National Park system also offered solutions. He believed that Park management could be improved through a redefinition of the ‘National Park’ concept. In Noble’s opinion, to ‘preserve in perpetuity’ is an unattainable goal for National Parks as long as the desire to allow recreation and keep Parks open ‘for the benefit and enjoyment of the public’ remains a part of that preservation. He argues that this is not preservation in its purest sense, and therefore it will never be accomplished. Not only will it never be accomplished now, but it will also ruin New Zealand’s most isolated landscapes because the push for human access into the ‘wild’ will leave no truly isolated places left.

Noble suggested that the term ‘wilderness area’ be used to rename future National Parks that have not yet been over-run by tourism operations. Such ‘wilderness areas’

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1 *AMCNPMP*, 2004, section 5.2.1
would require a management system that could truly ‘promote the goals intended by their designation’. Here Noble is referring to the explicit separation of preservation and use within National Park management priorities.2

Geographer W.W. Harris also referred to a similar idea that in 1974, when the current reserve areas were being elaborated upon by new concepts, such as the ‘Historic Park, the Coastal Park, the National Walkway and the National Recreation Area’.3 Harris states a hope that this

...elaboration of the reserve network will...make the future prospects of the old National Parks a great deal more secure. In particular it should enable the pressures on National Parks to be kept at manageable levels, so ensuring that the overriding goal of scenery preservation is not jeopardised.4

These ideas for an extension of the land classification system were taken onboard by DOC and placed into the 1987 Conservation Act. More recently they have been included in the ROS strategy to manage changes in the tourism industry so that visitor requirements are met and yet balanced with the National Park aim for a natural environment. At Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park this is evident in the Village being classified as an ‘amenities area’, confining commercial development to one place rather than letting it run rampant all over the Park.

In 1994 Neville Peat addressed this issue of land use and correct protection regarding Mount Aspiring National Park. He explained how the current Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan has made room for different land designation areas, such as the ‘wilderness’ areas promoted by both Harris and Noble. Within the Mount Aspiring National Park, the land has been divided into three varying zones categorising the level of human impact allowed upon each: the Moderate Impact, the Low Impact and the Wilderness zones. Moderate Impact zones are easily accessible, and contain most of the activity and development for the entire National Park. Low Impact zones perform as a buffer between the Moderate Impact and Wilderness zones. As well as being less

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2 Simon Noble, pp. 43-44
3 Harris, p. 236
4 Ibid.
accessible, a lesser amount of human activity is permitted in the Low Impact areas. Within the centre of the National Park is the Wilderness Zone, with no tracks, huts or bridges to allow human access. Aircrafts are not allowed to land, and re-supply drops are not allowed except in search and rescue operations.\(^5\)

Although the scope is beyond the capabilities of this essay in terms of length and depth, there have been questions raised about the value in UNESCO World Heritage sites. Because WH status attracts further tourist attention to National Parks, there are opinions that the temptation to draw tourists to such places defeats the purpose of their status. It places more pressure on conservation authorities to maintain the 'preservation' status, by the threat that they will lose it, but if more tourists come, then their efforts will be in vain.

Tourism is, however, a double-edged sword, which on one hand confers economic benefits through the sale of tickets and visitor spending on hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related services, but on the other, places stress on the fabric of destinations and the communities who live in them.\(^6\)

Another issue outside the scope of this essay, but yet intricately involved in the management of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, is the significance of the 1998 Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act. Amidst a major land grant, Ngai Tahu was granted guardianship of Mount Cook and the official title of the peak was changed to include the Maori word – ‘Aoraki’ which means ‘cloud piercer’. The peak is considered by the tribe to be an ancestor. Ngai Tahu membership in the Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Board is a prerequisite, and they are consulted in all Park development matters. The inclusion of Maori involvement into National Park management was part of a wider national issue that has been dealing with historical and contemporary Maori exclusion from many levels of society. The Waitangi Tribunal has been dealing with Maori appeals for the return of disputed land titles since its establishment in 1975 for that very purpose. Ken Piddington, the then Director-General of DOC, spoke in 1987 of Te Heuheu Tukino as

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...a visionary who could see more than a hundred years ahead how land would continue to be a bone of contention unless a bridge could be built between our cultures. As a foundation he used the concept of land as a non-commodity, a resource which could not be traded whenever its values transcended the marketplace.7

Referring to Tukino’s gifting of Tongariro, Ngaruhoe and Ruapehu to the Crown as a National Park in 1887, Piddington places the concept of National Parks in New Zealand as a ‘bridge’ between two cultural understandings of land use. Hence their inclusion into Park management at Aoraki/Mount Cook has been most significant and may lead to a re-conceptualisation of what landscape heritage can be.

Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park has been a site of negotiation for DOC in balancing the dual aims of the National Parks Act that allow recreation and tourism to occur within the same setting. ‘Preservation’ and ‘use’ are still seen as co-habitable within National Parks although the insidious nature of increasing visitor pressure means that over-use and crowding may not be seen as issues until it is too late.

7 Piddington, “The National Parks of Aotearoa-New Zealand: the crown jewels or the jewels in the crown?” p. 9 in One Hundred Years of National Parks in New Zealand: centenary seminar, ed. Croll.
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