

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor,

New Zealand Journal of Forestry.

What are the Specifications of a Qualified Forester ?

Sir,

In the time-consuming discussions on the definition of a "qualified forester" there is food for thought—much of it. Such thoughts are so numerous that a simple definition becomes elusive and finally seems impossible.

It is logical to consider first the aims of a forester and to decide the stage at which he is sufficiently adept to be called "qualified." A well-known forester in a word of advice to young men argued that no one should enter the profession to make money. If this be true, the *incentive* must be love of forestry, and the *aim* the creation of works that may bring everlasting fame. But are all foresters so ambitious as to eschew personal reward and remain content to make their objective the successful promotion of the profession. Admittedly, anyone imbued with such admirable and unselfish aims should deserve his forester's classification, but what then is a qualified forester, and to what stage of the profession must he advance before he is admitted to that indefinite category ?

Most men seek advancement to obtain power ; for some power is necessary to accomplish even small things. Some believe that demonstration of ability and successful "production of the goods" are pre-requisites in achieving recognition, while others use those about them as stepping stones in their climb to success. Is it necessary to distinguish between the two and, if so, how can it be done ?

In advancing, the forester tends to specialise in a particular field dependent upon either opportunity or his own inclination. He may endeavour to solve the numerous problems associated with conservation of the remnants of our indigenous forests and perpetuation of the major species therein ; or prefer to concentrate on the more easily grown exotics aided by the abundance of literature describing their habits and habitats. His leaning may be towards research work in a scientific field closely allied to forestry. Or he may become engrossed in utilisation, often by force of circumstances. Early realisation that administration offers the best opportunities for speedy advancement would probably result in neglect of the more technical work. All foresters can advance, but is status the criterion of a qualified man and do we endeavour to distinguish between the specialist and the general practitioner ?

Similarly, is it desirable or even possible to differentiate between the man with a wealth of practical experience and the graduate of a recognised School of Forestry. After all, few early foresters held degrees, yet they laid the foundations and their experience has become the basis of modern forestry study. And it is only a score of years

or so since foresters, in open-necked shirts, shunned the office and concentrated their efforts in the forests where skill and experience were used to best advantage in the sphere where they were obtained.

Early foresters were compelled to trudge through the forest, and they enjoyed it, but in this mechanical age we can certainly travel faster and farther in the same time. There is also a trend towards recording every detail for posterity and making up for the paucity of early records. But aren't we deluding ourselves just a little when we think we have progressed so far since those days? The modern forester—immaculate, typically professional—hastens to the office each morning in car (or truck if car is unobtainable) and returns home in the late afternoon just as immaculate. Due to the outlandish location of most forests, his periodic inspections are also made by car, and the scope of each inspection is limited by road access. On return to headquarters he relates his experience to his less fortunate colleagues and obviously disguises his dislike of the return to his dull office desk. Later a lengthy report is produced and read in turn by officers of higher and higher status. Less important reports by field officers are critically examined, it mattering little that the wielder of the blue pencil may never have seen the forest concerned. Out of all this welter of administrative detail there ultimately arises the Plan.

But meanwhile, with characteristic suddenness, sawmillers establish their mills or logging roads about the forests and clamour for logs. New silvicultural practices are evolved to enable their mills to cut to capacity. From the fertile brains of foresters (in conference) emanate new ideas, and committees are formed so that the field man may be instructed adequately on his responsibilities in the operations. Then follows more work, more staff, more vehicles, and more slide rules and adding machines for accountants who work out the apportionment of charges.

Who then are qualified foresters? Are they those who, like our precursors, endeavour to assist Nature to achieve something or are the moderns with high pressure approach, elegant appearance and advanced schooling our selection? Memories of the old foresters are dim and thoughts are lenient while our conception of the modern forester may be rather biased. Some may think we have obtained sufficient technical data and the qualified forester is now a purely administrative officer.

Just what do we require? Is it the simple knowledge of the practice of forestry, membership of an Institute of Foresters, capacity for administration, ability to talk on every subject without making a decision, or is it aptitude for writing voluminous and verbose reports similar to this letter.

Unfortunately I, too, cannot reach a decision.

Yours faithfully,

QUALIFIED FORESTER (?)