

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, 1968

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It is some years since a President looked at the general affairs of the Institute in his Presidential Address. This year I propose to examine the administration of the Institute and the contribution which the members make towards its activities. Some of my remarks may appear obvious, but occasionally it does no harm to repeat the obvious.

The Institute now has over 500 members of various grades and is no longer a small closely knit unit of people who, in the main, worked for one organization and knew each other. They held a convivial annual get-together, exchanged experiences and examined one another's field work. Today the Institute is much more heterogeneous because of people's more specialized interests and diverse employers. Because of today's complexities, members of a profession like ours must be divided into specialized sections. Then, how do we hold the Institute together and retain members' interest and support? As I shall mention later, support from the members in general seems to have slipped over the last few years; perhaps this is inevitable with numerical growth.

It is hoped that local sections will retain or increase their strength and still provide the convivial gatherings and pleasant field trips that are now not quite so practical or effective at our annual conferences. The fact that members work for diverse organizations should stimulate constructive rivalry, rather than divide the Institute's membership and opinion.

This year's Council elections demonstrate the lethargy and lack of interest there is in the Institute's affairs. I cannot believe that the retiring Council has done such a wonderful job that there was no need for an election at all. There were so few nominations for either office bearers or Council members that, had it not been for some last minute lobbying by Council, there would not have been a governing body for 1968-70. On the other hand, the voting poll showed that of those eligible, 83% cast their vote—which is better than normal.

While talking about Council elections, I would like to point out that future nominations must be carefully considered if Council is to be truly representative of the Institute's membership. Over the last ten years composition of membership has changed and will change more in the future.

Of the voting members, 37% are no longer employed by the Forest Service and of the total membership 41% are employed by organizations other than the Forest Service. The larger organizations now have recruiting and training programmes that are independent of the Forest Service, so members do not have a common background as hitherto. However, this will to a large extent be overcome when the forestry school at the University of Canterbury begins to yield graduates.

If there are a large number of nominations for Council, it will be more difficult for the lesser-known non-Forest Service nominees to be successful in the election and so representation of a section of opinion will be lost. I am not advocating deliberate

sectional representation, but each member should take the overall good of the Institute into consideration before casting his vote.

From time to time Council is criticized for not taking a firm stand on any particular issue or formulating an Institute policy on one subject or another. Because of our growing and diverse membership, this is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

Over recent years, attempts have been made to gain the views of most members on some issues; this is very time consuming and often inconclusive. It then becomes necessary for a few people to represent the Institute's view as best they see fit. They must seek out the relevant information in formulating their views. But I must emphasize that all details are not always available to them; and for very good reasons too. It is hoped that any subsequent statement made in the name of the Institute, following due consideration of the facts and views available, will be "to further the development of forestry and the interests of the profession of forestry in the Dominion of New Zealand". If these requirements are met, I sincerely hope the comment or criticism will be taken in the spirit in which it is meant—an informed opinion from an increasingly growing and diverse group. We must provide an independent forum of professional opinion, given and received in an atmosphere of goodwill and best intention. It will express the view of the majority. The Institute is already represented, by invitation, on two or three specific committees throughout New Zealand. Our chosen representative carries a great responsibility to present the views of a professional forester.

If he does this to the best of his ability, I trust he will always have our support. However, opportunity must be given for the expression of the contrary point of view.

This leads me on to the type of person who should accept a position on Council. If the Institute is to have a critical influence on forestry in New Zealand (and you may not agree that it should necessarily have one) it is becoming increasingly difficult for senior officers of employing organizations to express their views on some matters, because of their privileged position. They cannot be expected to have divided loyalties or to release information which is confidential to the working position they occupy. Therefore it could be desirable to have younger people on Council, who will not find themselves in this dilemma. Now that regular Council meetings are held and more business has to be conducted commensurate with the Institute's growth, many senior officers find they cannot spare the time, especially to be office bearers. Again the younger councillor could be in a better position to serve the Institute, although his lack of experience and contact would be a disadvantage.

But if one looks at the indices of recent *Journals* and lists of participants in recent symposia, it is noticeable that the younger members are not participating or contributing in the Institute's main activities. The *Journal* Editor is always seeking material for publication, and people should not be discouraged by lack of experience or scientific expertise. Within the limits of editorial requirements, the *Journal* is a good place for junior members to launch into writing up particular aspects of their work. In this way they contribute to the good of the Institute and broaden their

own experience. They will often find rewarding contacts made as a result of such writings.

The *Journal* also provides a medium in which a group or individual dissenting opinion may be expressed, not always possible in an official report. There is then the opportunity to challenge or refute the opinion expressed, again in an atmosphere of goodwill.

Perhaps the type of symposium subjects chosen in recent years have been too specialized, advanced or "political" for younger members to participate. They could have been discouraged or feel diffident about expressing their views before the type of people chosen to speak at recent Annual Conferences.

While the symposium is the most fashionable way of running this type of Conference today, we could perhaps gain by having a much more general forestry subject and invite anyone at all to submit a paper and speak briefly to it. In this way there might be a wider participation by more members. I believe we should try it for a year or two. Indirectly, of course, this would be a great help to the *Journal* Editor, who is always appealing for copy — this year is no exception.

I have tried to point out to you some of the difficulties in conducting the Institute's affairs and how some of them might be resolved. Council needs your expression of opinion before it can decide to go one way or another — this view has not always been easy to obtain. Council members are all very approachable and I am sure would welcome a verbal or written approach on any subject during the year. The benefits you obtain from being a member of the Institute will depend on what you contribute to it, how you select your Council members and how you support them in the things you want done.

I can assure you I am not pessimistic about the future; the Institute is far from falling apart or being dead, but it needs your action to keep it a live organization.